ST. VINCENT FERRER,

OF THE ORDER OF FRIAR PREACHERS:

HIS LIFE, SPIRITUAL TEACHING, AND PRACTICAL DEVOTION.

BY THE

REV. FR. ANDREW PRADEL,

OF THE SAME ORDER.

Translated from the French

BY THE

REV. FR. T. A. DIXON, ORD. PRÆD.

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1875.

Timete deum et date illi honorem quia venit hora iudicij
Sant vincent

APPROBATIONS.

HAVING at the request of the Very Reverend Father Provincial, read the work entitled, "St. Vincent Ferrer, of the Order of Friar Preachers: his Life, Spiritual Teaching, and Practical Devotion," we have found nothing therein but what is conducive to the edification of the faithful.

FR. J. M. MONSABRÉ, ORD. PRÆD.

FR. T. BOURARD, ORD. PRÆD. L.S.T.

HAVING seen the above approbation, we sanction the publication of the work entitled, "St. Vincent Ferrer," etc.

FR. A. N. SAUDREAU, ORD. PRÆD.
Provincial of the French Province.

Imprimatur:
A. DE POUS,
Vicar-General.

TOULOUSE, *the 9th of October*, 1863.

Nihil obstat.

FR. RAYMUNDUS PALMER, ORD. PRÆD.
Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur:
+ HENRICUS EDUARDUS,
Card. Archiep. Westmonast.

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TO HIS

BRETHREN AND SISTERS IN ST. DOMINIC,

SPREAD THROUGHOUT

ENGLAND, IRELAND, AND AMERICA,

This Work

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE

TRANSLATOR.

St. Peter's Priory, Hinckley,

Feast of St. Dominic, August 4th, 1875.

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PREFACE.

A DESCRIPTION of the marvellous influence exercised by St. Vincent Ferrer on his age, is not the principal design of the work which we offer to the public. In an admirable biography of this great man, the Abbé Bayle has traced out the most salient points in his character; to reproduce therefore in the following pages the picture which he has drawn, would be foreign to our purpose. Our intention, then, is rather to initiate the pious public, and especially the Dominican family, into the intimate life and heroic virtues of the man of God, in order that they may imitate him, according to the degree of perfection to which each soul is divinely called. It would, indeed, be a strange illusion to imagine that there was much more to be admired than imitated in this remarkable life. We can, on the contrary, mould ourselves in many ways on this model, especially when it has reference to interior dispositions.

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After giving a summary idea of the life of St. Vincent Ferrer, we were desirous to repeat fully his spiritual teaching, and to supply to souls who, walking in his footsteps, aspire moreover to honour him, the most useful means of offering him the worship which he desires. Hence the division of the work into three parts. The first is historical. The abridged picture of the life of the Saint which we present to our readers, embodies in it all that we consider suitable to edify souls. The second part treats of the secrets of the interior life unveiled by the Saint in his "Treatise on the Spiritual Life," as well as of the particular methods which he taught, of sanctifying the essential acts of a Christian. The third part contains the principal exercises which may be performed in honour of St. Vincent Ferrer: viz. those of the Fridays before and after his Feast, those of his Novena, and some special prayers.

Father Teoli, a Religious of our Order, who lived in the last century, and wrote the most complete and accurate life of our Saint, has furnished us with the basis of our work. We have besides, reproduced his opuscule of the Fridays, by inserting herein some of the examples and prayers, in order to adapt them to the devotion for the seven Fridays before and after the Saint's Feast.

Following the example of this praiseworthy writer, we

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have not hesitated to relate certain traits well calculated to lead us to admire the stupendous and supreme power of working miracles which God sometimes accords to His Saints. It should be well borne in mind that the facts which we reveal, rest on documents worthy of belief and respect, and that we address ourselves to pious readers. But this class admits the divine marvels the more readily, in proportion as they who compose it are less carnal and more pure. We moreover willingly repeat, with Father Teoli, that, in the facts here recorded, as well as in the title of Blessed, which we have applied to certain personages, whose worship has not yet received the formal sanction of the Holy See, our intention is not to speak as though we had authority in the Church; we merely propose them with the guarantees of a purely human authority.

May our publication be serviceable to you, dear reader! Should it produce any good in you, be pleased, in return, to remember us in your prayers to the Saint whom we shall have venerated together. And you will crown this charity which we hope for from you, if you will join to it a particular intention in favour of some pious persons who have afforded us useful and friendly help in the accomplishment of this work.

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ST. VINCENT FERRER.

PART THE FIRST.

LIFE OF ST. VINCENT FERRER.

SECTION THE FIRST.

From the Saint's Birth to his Religious Profession. 1350–1368.

CHAPTER I.

PRODIGIES WHICH PRECEDED THE BIRTH OF ST. VINCENT FERRER —HIS BAPTISM—INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD OF ST. VINCENT.

IN the middle of the fourteenth century there dwelt at Valencia, in Spain, a pious couple, who were not less distinguished by birth than by the virtues which adorned their lives. These were William Ferrer, a descendant of an ancient Catalonian family, and Constance Miguel, the daughter of a naval officer and kinswoman of the Bishop of Valencia. They had already been blessed with two children, when a third was born to them on the 23rd of January, in the year 1350.

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History affirms that certain remarkable signs preceded the birth of this child of benediction. One night while the father slept, he dreamed that he entered the church of the Dominicans at Valencia, when one of that Order was preaching to the multitude from the pulpit, and that the preacher, turning towards him, addressed him in these words: "I felicitate you, William; in a few days you will have a son who will become a prodigy of learning and sanctity; he will be the object of your delight and the honour of your house; the world will resound with the fame of his wondrous deeds; he will fill heaven with joy and hell with terror; he will put on the habit which I wear, and will be received in the Church with universal joy, as one of its first Apostles." Then it seemed to him that the people, who had attentively listened to what was said, thanked God with a loud voice for the marvellous news, and offered him their felicitations likewise. Delighted at these consoling predictions, he joined his thanksgiving to that of the multitude. When he awoke, he related to his spouse all that had transpired in the course of his dream, and they resolved to confer with their kinsman, the Bishop. To William's account of what had occurred Constance added two things equally singular, which she had herself experienced; the first was that from the commencement of her pregnancy she had felt none of the pains which usually accompany that state; and the second, that she frequently fancied she had heard the child, which was near its birth, give utterance to cries like to the barking of a little dog,—a circumstance much resembling

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the vision of the Blessed Jane of Aza, the mother of St. Dominic.

The prelate clearly understood the meaning of these mysterious signs, and said to them: "Rejoice in the Lord; the child which you are about to bring into the world will be a worthy son of St. Dominic, and will be called to do much good among the people by his preaching. Take great care of him, and educate him holily, that he may correspond to the singular graces with which God will endow him." [1]

As if to confirm the high opinion which was conceived of this child, God was pleased to work, while it was still in the maternal womb, by its mediation, a remarkable prodigy. Constance went one day to visit a blind woman on whom she was wont to bestow a monthly alms, and having given it to her as usual, she added, "My daughter, pray God that the child which I bear may arrive safe." The blind woman bent her head on the mother's bosom and said, "May God bestow that favour on you!" At the same instant her material blindness left her, and being suddenly illuminated in her soul with prophetic light, she exclaimed, "Madam, it is an angel you have, and it is he who has cured me of my affliction." The child, like another John the Baptist, applauded the words of the poor woman by leaping in the womb, and the mother herself gave testimony of it. [2]

Such were the signs that preceded the birth of Vincent

[1] Ranzano, *apud Bolland*, April, To.n. i.
[2] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. i. c. 1.

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Ferrer. This birth was an event for the whole city. The principal inhabitants made it a point of duty to accompany the new-born to the baptismal font. Besides a municipal deputation, three of the chief magistrates were present; and as they could not agree on the name that was to be given to this predestined child, the priest who administered the sacrament was divinely inspired to name him *Vincent*, a name that was in every way adapted to his future destiny, inasmuch as he would one day attack so vigorously and conquer so gloriously, sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Constance was unwilling that her son should be committed to the care of a strange nurse. This child was too precious to allow any one but herself to bestow on him the cares which tender infancy requires, cares which are doubtless wearisome, but nevertheless always sweet to a mother's heart. She was amply rewarded for this devotedness on her part, for the little Saint gave her but small trouble. Seldom did he cry, and he would remain tranquil wherever his mother placed him. When not asleep in his cradle, he was peaceful and almost recollected. His open eyes would search eagerly for his mother, without being moistened with tears. Nature exhausted her gifts in his behalf. To a charming disposition, with which she endowed him, he joined also a countenance that was so sweet, well-shaped, and sympathetic, that all delighted to gaze upon him and to caress him.[1]

An extraordinary event contributed not a little to

[1] Ranzano, *apud Bolland.*

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increase his renown in the city. Vincent was yet in his cradle, and had hardly begun to lisp, when Valencia was desolated by a continued drought. Public prayers were offered up to obtain a refreshing rain, but not a cloud appeared in the sky. The whole population groaned under the calamity, and Constance shared the common affliction, when, one day, expressing her uneasiness, she heard the child in swathing clothes distinctly pronounce these words: "If you wish for rain, carry me in procession, and you shall be favourably heard." Cheered as well as surprised at these miraculous words, Constance hastened to the city magistrates to impart to them her message; the latter, considering on the one hand the probity and good sense of the mother, and on the other the marvellous signs which had already drawn public attention on the child, decreed that the procession thus indicated should take place. The little Vincent was carried triumphantly, and scarcely had the procession terminated than the sky became suddenly overcast, and copious rains fell for several hours upon the parched earth.[1] This, and other miracles, bore Vincent's name to the court of the King of Aragon. Queen Eleanor, coming to Valencia, caused him to be taken to her palace that she might see him and caress him.

In learning to speak, the child learnt also how to pray, and was instructed especially in the mysteries of

[1] Immemorial tradition of the inhabitants of Valencia, confirmed by two learned Masters in Theology at the General Chapter of the Friar Preachers held in Bologne, 1725. Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. i. c. 3.

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faith. These instructions were imprinted on his soul as upon soft wax, but when once they had taken root they attained the solidity of bronze. There was no need to teach him twice the same lesson on religious matters. This sacred seed bore in his heart its salutary fruits. Penetrated with a sovereign fear of God, and animated with a great desire for good, he carefully avoided everything that could, in the smallest degree, tarnish his innocence.

From his fifth year he showed an intelligence far above his age, which inspired his companions and others with singular veneration for him. He began to study when only six years old, and his masters discovered in him a keen intelligence and a soul full of ardour, which enabled him in a short time to make rapid progress in the knowledge of grammar and letters.

At the age of seven years Vincent entered the clerical state, and was even provided with an ecclesiastical benefice. At twelve his mind was so fully developed as to enable him to penetrate into the difficulties of philosophy, and he devoted two years to that abstract study. In fine, he commenced in his fourteenth year his theological course, and applied himself to this latter science till the time when he began seriously to think of determining the state of life to which the voice of God called him. At this period of his life the virtues of the youth had in nowise slackened. Their growth, on the contrary, was visible, for grace is never weakened in a soul which faithfully responds to its advances. It was his custom to assist daily at Mass, and his greatest delight was to

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serve the priest. His prayers were long and fervent. He had a tender devotion to our Lord's Passion. He said habitually the Little Office of the Cross, to which he added that of the Blessed Virgin. He fasted regularly on Wednesday and Friday every week. His tenderness for the poor led him into a thousand kinds of good works which charity suggested to him. But what we wish chiefly to remark in our Saint are the dispositions which he manifested from his earliest years for his future calling to the Apostolate.

When yet a child Vincent would commit to memory the leading points of the sermons at which he assisted, and repeat them to his family round the domestic hearth. Frequently drawing away his schoolfellows from their games, he would gather them around him, then mounting a hillock or fence, would recite to them with earnestness, grace, and unction, whatever his recollection inspired him with, imitating the gestures and movements of the preachers whom he most admired. He continued the same practices as he grew up. Thus, during the years of his boyhood, he accomplished much good among the youth of his own age, by speaking to them of God, of the soul, and of heaven. His example stamped on them a living impression. All looked upon him as a saint, so much did the grace of miracles appear to increase with his years. Many essayed to imitate his virtues and to walk in his footsteps, whom he lovingly directed by his good counsels.[1]

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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CHAPTER II.

ST. VINCENT FERRER RECEIVES THE HABIT OF THE FRIAR PREACHERS—HIS NOVICIATE AND PROFESSION.

OUR Saint having now attained his eighteenth year, the moment had arrived when it behoved him to decide on the sort of life that should best suit his own tastes and the inspirations of grace. His father forestalled him in this by the following proposal: "My son," said he, "I leave you full and entire liberty; and be assured of this, I shall oppose no obstacle to the accomplishment of your will. Nevertheless," he added, "I would counsel you to embrace the religious life in the Order of the Friar Preachers; for such, in effect, seems to me to be God's Will, when I reflect on the signs that preceded your birth." And at the same time he related to him in detail the marvellous testimonies that had been manifested, and the interpretation which their relation, the Bishop, had put upon them. Vincent replied, without a moment's deliberation, "My father, you have anticipated my wishes, and I thank our Lord for having inspired you with the thought to propose that which is the most agreeable to me. I have no longing after the riches and pleasures and honours of this life; my love, thoughts, and resolutions are centred in God. I am, therefore, determined to follow His divine call to the Dominican family; and now I desire nothing more except my mother's consent and your joint blessing, that I may

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go in peace to serve God in the retreat which His voice clearly indicates to me." At these words his father embraced him with tears of tender compassion, and under the influence of that sweet emotion they went to find Constance, who also shed an abundance of tears, not of sorrow, but of holy joy. "My beloved child," cried she, "what you are about to do is what I have always longed for on your part. I have frequently asked this favour of God, and now He has heard me. Oh! happy event for you and for us. We ought to congratulate each other; you, because you are about to withdraw yourself from the miseries of this life, we, because we have obtained from our Lord the accomplishment of our most cherished desires. May God fill you, my child, with every blessing. As for myself and your father, we most willingly give you ours to the end of your life."

On the morning following that happy day, William Ferrer himself conducted his son to the Convent of the Friar Preachers at Valencia. This was on the 2nd of February, in the year 1367. The Prior of the convent was apprised that same night, by a miraculous vision, of the precious conquest which the Order was about to make. St. Dominic appeared to him, holding the youthful postulant by the hand. It seemed to him that Vincent, all inflamed with fervour, said to him, "Father, behold me at your feet to become one of your religious." At the same time, his conductor added, "Receive him; he shall be your brother and my son." The Prior, recognising St. Dominic by the star which shone on his

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forehead, threw himself at his feet, when instantly all disappeared. There remained in his heart an ardent wish to see the speedy accomplishment of the vision with which he had been favoured, and he was fully consoled when, on the following morning, our Saint, accompanied by his father, cast himself at his feet, and humbly asked to receive the holy habit, affirming that his sole motive of the step he was taking was to obey the voice of God, Who called him to serve Him under the glorious standard of St. Dominic.[1] Who shall describe the joy felt by the man of God to whom this demand was addressed, when he heard a young man so accomplished imploring, with such earnestness and humility, the habit of the Friar Preachers? His Convent and the whole Order were about to be enriched with an incomparable treasure. He experienced then a sentiment akin to that of the holy and aged Simeon, whose high privilege it was to receive in the Temple, in the name of the Almighty, the presentation of the Child Jesus, made by Mary and Joseph. This was on the day of the solemnity commemorative of that mystery. There was, then, a striking similarity in the offering. Vincent offered himself spontaneously to the sacrifice of the religious life, while his parents accompanied the pious victim. There was even a likeness in the reception. For as the angels, the ministers of the sanctuary, the widows of the Temple, and the holy people of Jerusalem shared the divine joy of Simeon, so also may it be said that the religious of the convent, the friends of

[1] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. ii. c. 1.

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the Saint, his family, and the entire city of Valencia were associated in the joy of the venerable head of the community, and united with him in thanksgiving to God for this inestimable benefit. We may well imagine that there would be but one voice for the admission of the postulant.

The day of his clothing was fixed for the 5th of February, the Feast of the glorious virgin St. Agatha—a day worthy of eternal memory to the inhabitants of the city. It was one hundred and twenty-eight years after the Convent of St. Dominic had been established. The Order was then governed by a Vicar-General, Father Elias of Toulouse. The Dominican province of Aragon had at its head Blessed James Dominic de Collioure, and the Prior of the Convent of Valencia was the Venerable Father Beranger de Gelasio.[1]

From the first moment of his noviciate, Vincent felt so forcibly the grace which God had bestowed upon him in calling him into religion, that he ceased not to thank heaven, and to kiss with ardour and indescribable contentment the white woollen in which he was clothed. In the Convent which he had entered were many religious whose lives might well have served him as an example. But his generous soul chose a model even more perfect. He resolved to make his life a close imitation of that of St. Dominic; and that he might the more readily understand his actions, he commenced to read, with singular interest, the life of the great patriarch. It was then especially that he learnt to distinguish the true

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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character of the Friar Preacher—as he afterwards explained in his sermons—a character which consists in angelic purity, perfect obedience, and divine poverty; not to remain in a monastery in a state of immobility, shut up in a cell like the anchorites of old; but to go, after the example of Christ, the Apostles, and the holy Founder of the Order, to preach the Gospel throughout the world. "For it s for this," added he, "that the Order of the Friar Preachers was instituted."

Vincent penetrated in a wonderful manner the deep meaning of each of the characteristics of the life of the blessed Father. As a proof of this, we need but cite the interpretation which he gave of the celebrated vision, in which St. Dominic appeared crowned with glory, and ascending to heaven by means of two ladders. "Our Order," he observed, "does not lead its subjects to heaven by the ladder of the contemplative life alone, nor by that of the active life only, but it enables them to ascend to the conquest of Paradise by means of both. They who are in the simple monastic state reach heaven by the ladder of contemplation; and it is by ascending that of the active life that the military orders arrive at the possession of their country; but the children of St. Dominic must have a foot on each, by uniting the exercises of prayer and study to the work of apostolic preaching." This fact alone enables us to judge with what clearness of mind our Saint knew his destiny, and the duties which it involved. The young novice was ever faithful to this light, and to the day of his death he reflected in his person the perfect image of St. Dominic.

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During the course of his noviciate Vincent applied himself exclusively, according to the spirit of the rule, to the exercises of the interior life. Never did he omit any of the prayers or mortifications which he imposed on himself. And though the Dominican Constitutions do not bind under sin, yet he observed their smallest details with as great exactitude as if he had been bound to their fulfilment under pain of grievous sin. At choir and at recreation he was the first; nor did he ever absent himself from any of the common duties to satisfy his own particular devotion. He obeyed every one with profound humility. His sweetness and modesty rendered him amiable to all, and the affability of his character caused his conversation to be sought by every member of the noviciate. He was the youngest in the Convent, but was already looked upon as the first in sanctity.

Three months of his noviciate had now elapsed, when a trial, painful to the heart of a son, beset his vocation. Vincent was called upon to resist the tears of his own mother. Constance Miguel, going to the convent one day, asked to see her son. When he appeared she represented to him, with tears, the following considerations: she could not live without him; it was easy for him, her son, to sanctify himself among the secular clergy; besides, his family stood in need of the revenues of his ecclesiastical benefice, which obliged him to renounce his religious profession. He must therefore leave the convent and return to the world. Sorrowfully affected by these plaints, Vincent nevertheless answered his mother with invincible firmness: "You were willing

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that I should enter the cloister, and you gave me your blessing when I left you. Why then shall I go back? I shall ever remember the saying of St. Bernard: 'He who leaves the convent to return to the world, quits the company of angels to join that of the devil!' I conjure you, then, my dear mother, to return to your first sentiments; let us view the things of this world with the eye of faith, and let us value them now as we shall wish to have valued them at the hour of death. One thing only is necessary, and it behoves each of us to accomplish his salvation in the manner that God ordains."

These words affording to Constance no hope of persuading her son to renounce his vocation, filled her with sadness, and she returned to her home in great grief. But God did not abandon her in that trying circumstance. As she approached her house she saw a poor person, who, saluting her courteously, said, "Madam, why are you sorrowful? Have you forgotten the miraculous barkings which you heard when you bore Vincent in your womb? Has your husband's prophetic dream passed from your memory? Do you not remember how the Bishop of Valencia interpreted those mysterious signs, and how you predicted that your son would one day be a Friar Preacher? Would you now frustrate the accomplishment of the Divine Will?" These words consoled Constance, and drew forth her tears. Ere long she recognised in that poor person a messenger from heaven; for, going into her house to get an alms, to recompense him for his good words, she no longer

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found him on her return either at the threshold or in the street.

The year of probation passed over without further interruption. Then the young novice, who had been the edification of the community, was unanimously admitted to the solemn profession of his vows. He pronounced them in the hands of Father Matthew Benincasa, who that year was Prior of the Convent of Valencia. Such was the joy of the brethren, that every year afterwards, till the destruction of the Convent, they celebrated the anniversary of that happy day.[1]

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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SECTION THE SECOND.

From the Saint's Religious Profession to his call to a Miraculous Apostolate.—1368–1398.

CHAPTER III.

STUDIES OF ST. VINCENT FERRER—HIS PROFOUND LEARNING—HIS GREAT PIETY DURING HIS COURSE OF STUDIES AND SCHOLASTIC LABOURS.

HAD St. Vincent died in his noviciate or shortly after his profession in religion, he would doubtless have merited to be venerated on the altar, like the Blessed Peter of Luxemburg, who died at the age of eighteen, and the youthful confessors Aloysius de Gonzaga and Stanislaus Kostka, who are the glory and ornament of the Society of Jesus. But Divine Providence was pleased to increase in a high degree, by a long life of merit, the beauty of the crown of glory reserved for him. Vincent bore the sacred yoke of the religious and apostolic life for more than fifty years. During that long space of half a century he united with perfect fidelity and undaunted constancy the austerities of the cloister with the fatigues of the ministry of souls. We may judge hence of the merits accumulated by this intrepid workman, and of the

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immense harvest of glory which he gathered to the end of his career. From the moment that he saw himself irrevocably engaged in the Order of Preachers, he resolved to apply himself without relaxation to three things: assiduous prayer, the study of theology, and Holy Scripture. These form the triple duty of a Friar Preacher who desires to labour fruitfully for the good of souls. For without prayer he can neither sanctify himself nor others; without the study of theology and of the Scripture he lacks the knowledge which is indispensable to his occupying the pulpit with becoming dignity.

There exists in the Order the admirable custom that students in whom is discovered a more than ordinary capacity should be employed in teaching others as soon as they have finished their own studies. This professorial employment is even necessary to enable them to advance in the order of academical degrees, which, despite a searching examination, cannot be obtained but upon that condition. One can readily understand that such a system is well suited to form solid preachers; for an accomplished student who has spent ten, fifteen, or twenty years, whether in studying or in teaching philosophy, theology, and Holy Scripture, ought to be, at the end of that term, trained to all the difficulties of science, and admirably qualified to explain to the people the truths of dogmatic and moral teaching. St. Vincent passed through all those different stages till he reached the highest grade of all, that of *Master in Theology*.

On leaving the noviciate his superiors put him to teach logic and philosophy in the same Convent of Valen-

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cia, and he acquitted himself of that duty to the satisfaction of the students who attended his lectures. Many students from the city were desirous to become his auditors, that they might listen to a professor whose science was only surpassed by his sanctity.

Three years later Vincent was sent to Lerida to teach. He remained there two years, and his lectures bore the same fruitful results as at Valencia. When his superiors judged him to be sufficiently versed in the subtleties of metaphysics, they wished to apply him to the special study of the Holy Scripture, and for that purpose assigned him, in the year 1372, to the Convent of Barcelona, where he resided three years. Here he devoted himself with incredible ardour to the study of the Sacred Writings; and that he might increase his knowledge of the Old Testament he learned Hebrew. St. Raymund of Pennafort, the third General of the Order, had instituted in Spain many schools of that language for the sake of the Jews, who were numerous in the country, and to succeed in whose conversion a knowledge of the Hebrew tongue was indispensable. He had too great a zeal for the salvation of souls not to enter into the views of St. Raymund. He acquired such a perfect knowledge of the Hebrew that he was able to quote to the Jews every text of the Old Testament, and to refute the absurd doctrines of the Talmud, and the lying stories with which that book abounds. It is thought that he also knew the Greek and Arabic tongues. Three years were devoted by the Saint to the exclusive study of Scripture; and one year more to teaching

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physics in the same Convent of Barcelona. In the year 1376 he returned to Valencia, where he renewed his fervour by means of a spiritual retreat. Then, in the year 1377, he was sent by the chapter of his province to Toulouse, and in the following year to Paris. In both cities he continued to perfect himself in the divine sciences by teaching them to others. His sojourn at Paris lasted but a year, after which he returned again to Valencia, and took charge of the theological course during six consecutive years. In fine, in the year 1388, his superiors sent him to Lerida, to receive the degree of Doctor of Theology in the celebrated university of that city. When they laid this command upon him he humbly submitted himself to it, not to gratify a vain ambition, but to render himself capable of doing greater good in the Church. He was then in his thirty-eighth year, and had been a priest only seven years. While he stayed at Barcelona he composed two treatises, one on *Dialectical Suppositions*, the other on the *Nature of the Universal*. His contemporaries speak of them with much praise, but these works have not been transmitted to our times.[1]

Study and teaching are rocks that are sometimes fatal to the piety of those engaged in them. St. Vincent knew how to avoid those perils. Making the science of perfection his first care, he suffered not the fervour which inflamed his soul to grow cold in the midst of scholastic speculations. Study was to him a continual exercise of devotion; not only did he refer it

[1] Ranzano, and all the Saint's biographers.

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God. To understand his sublime sentiments respecting the sanctity of the state which he had embraced, the obligations of the religious life, and the virtues of the soul which, renouncing the world, desires to live only for God and the salvation of its neighbours; to gain an insight into the numberless secrets which the Saint discovered in order to accomplish in the highest degree of perfection the commonest acts of life, such as repose, sleeping, eating, conversation, and recreation; it suffices to read his "Treatise on the Spiritual Life," one of his few works that have escaped the wreck of time. There we shall find the living portraiture of him who wrote it. St. Vincent has painted himself therein, and has, doubtless, given us a true idea of his own perfection. The author first lays down a number of general rules, then he enters in detail into the daily exercises which fill up the life of a religious; he next enumerates the various motives which ought to engage him to tend without ceasing to true perfection. Poverty, silence, and purity of heart are, according to him, the necessary foundations of a spiritual life. He further explains, with charming simplicity, the manner of regulating the body at table, in the dormitory, and at choir. The advice he gives, how to avoid in the various practices of mortification softness and excess, displays a remarkable depth of wisdom. As to the labours employed in the acquisition of science, we ought, he says, to study as becomes Christians, to transform, so to speak, study into prayer. In the same work will be found useful advice on the subject of false revelations which ensnare spiritual men. In fine, he

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prescribes a method of preaching, recommending, above all, simplicity, and even a sort of naïveté which the preacher may indulge in with a view to rendering himself more intelligible to his auditory. All these different counsels were the fruits of St. Vincent's own reflections, experience, and daily practice.

The evil spirit tempted him in a thousand ways to lead him into grievous faults, or at least to relax the ardour of his zeal in regard to good. We find a record of two apparitions of Satan in the "Spiritual Instruction" for the second Friday before the Saint's Feast, and in that for the eighth day of his novena. But the Saint always victoriously escaped the plots of hell.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST PREACHINGS OF ST. VINCENT FERRER—CONTINUATION OF THE SAINT'S PREACHING UNTIL HIS DEFINITIVE CALL TO AVIGNON.

T was while he sojourned at Barcelona—from the year 1372 to 1375—that our Saint commenced to preach publicly to the people. He was then only in deacon's orders. Such was the fervour, unction, and eloquence of his discourses, that the multitude was deeply moved. Numberless conversions signalised his first feat of arms in the apostolic warfare. People flocked not only from the neighbouring cities, but from more than ten leagues round, that they might hear him. So great was the concourse of people that the largest churches were insufficient to hold them; and to

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satisfy their devotion, Vincent was obliged to preach to them in the public squares.

A remarkable incident occurred which tended greatly to establish his authority among the people. For a whole year Barcelona was desolated by a frightful famine; the wheat failed, and efforts were made on every side to supply the deficiency, but in vain. Human succour was no longer available. The inhabitants had recourse to public prayers and processions to obtain of God a deliverance from the plague. One day, in the beginning of the spring of 1375, a numerous procession arrived in one of the city squares, and Vincent addressed to the multitude a fervent exhortation to repentance. He represented to them how a forgetfulness of the divine law brought upon Christian people the terrible scourge of famine; then he exhorted them to place their confidence in God, who would not permit His children to perish in the midst of the evils which He sent upon them to correct and sanctify them. Then he suddenly exclaimed: "Have courage and be glad, my brethren, for this very night two vessels will arrive in this port laden with wheat, which will supply you with abundant provisions." But on that particular day, and for many days previously, the sea was so terribly agitated, that it seemed impossible for any vessel to live in so great a tempest. Few only of his hearers believed in the prophecy: the greater number murmured against the preacher, taxing him with imprudence, boasting, and vainglory. His own brethren, to whom these complaints were made, cautioned him to be more guarded in his speech for the future.

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Vincent received the admonition with sincere humility; then, without losing his serenity of soul, spent the rest of the day at the foot of the altar, beseeching God to pardon the want of faith in the people, and not to withhold from them the succour which He destined for them. Great, indeed, was the surprise of those whom the Saint's words had irritated, when, towards evening, two vessels freighted with wheat entered the port of Barcelona, which were followed in a few days by twenty others, bearing similar cargoes from the ports of Flanders. At the sight of such an abundant supply of provisions, they acknowledged the truth of the Saint's prophecy, repented of having murmured against him, and sought to repair the injury done to him, by listening to him in future with perfect docility.[1]

According to his biographers, the man of God, during his stay in Paris in the year 1379, was not content with instructing the young religious committed to his care, but he also announced the Divine Word to the people. His preaching in the French metropolis bore the same marvellous fruits which accompanied it in Spain. His unrivalled eloquence was not only listened to with keen admiration, but with compunction of heart and tears of repentance. Each of his discourses was followed by numerous conversions.

Valencia, which gave him birth, was, however, the principal theatre of his success at this period of his life. An eager multitude thronged around his pulpit, and he wrought in souls prodigies of grace and sanctification.

[1] Ranzano, and other biographers of the Saint.

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When he was promoted to the priesthood his success increased still more. He was immediately permitted to use the faculties which he received to absolve from sin. Having begun then to hear confessions, he reaped himself in great part the fruit of the Gospel seed which he had sown for a long time by his preaching. In this useful ministry he consolidated marvellously the immense good which he had begun in his public preaching. Moreover, the inhabitants of Valencia were not content with seeing in him an enlightened guide in the path of Christian perfection, a skilful physician of souls; but they considered him a universal adviser and the refuge of all who were afflicted. All classes of persons had recourse to him. The people and the nobility equally consulted him as an oracle, and obeyed with docility his decisions, which were replete with tact and justice.

It was then that, jealous of his success, hell invented many scandals against the Saint, which we reserve for the present, and shall relate only the following.

One night, a wicked old man went to the house of a person of ill fame, disguised in the black mantle of the Friar Preachers. He made great promises to her, adding that his name was Vincent Ferrer; but the woman never saw him again. She then carried her complaint to the warden of the city, who happened that year to be Boniface Ferrer, brother of the Saint. The warden on hearing her complaint suspected it to be a monstrous falsehood inspired through hatred or envy. The Dominicans were to traverse a part of the city in procession. Boniface, accompanied by several witnesses,

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stationed himself with the plaintiff, in a house, where they could see all the friars pass. He then asked her to point out to him the individual of whom she complained. She could not distinguish him. He pointed to his own brother. "Is he the person?" he asked.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "he is a saint, I have sometimes heard him preach."

"That saint is Vincent Ferrer," he said, "and I am his brother; you have been imposed upon, in order to calumniate him."

Still Boniface could find no rest until he had discovered the guilty person. He then summoned him before several judges, and obliged him to ask pardon of the Saint. This is the old man of whom mention is made in the "Spiritual Instruction" for the fifth day of the novena.[1]

St. Vincent had been a Master in Theology two years, and was engaged in preaching to the inhabitants of Valencia and other cities of Aragon, when Cardinal Peter de Luna passed through that city. This prelate had been canon and provost of the cathedral. The Church was at that moment, unhappily, divided between the Popes of Avignon and those of Rome. Peter de Luna went into Spain in quality of Apostolic Legate, to induce that country to accept the authority of Clement VII., then Pope of Avignon. He had already heard Vincent spoken of, and was not surprised at the unanimous praise which his countrymen heaped upon him. He had himself occasion to judge how much the Saint merited the high

[1] Ranzano, and other biographers of the Saint.

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esteem which surrounded him, and resolved to attach him to himself during his legation in Spain, then to present him at the court of Clement VII. at Avignon. Venerating in his person an Ambassador of the Holy See, Vincent consented to accompany him, and followed him to Salamanca, where the King of Castile then was. In his journey, his zeal did not allow him to remain silent, and he preached in the various cities through which he passed. This was not without its fruit; for in Valladolid he converted a Jewish Rabbin, who, being promoted to the priesthood, afterwards became Bishop of Carthagena. He brought also to the faith, or to a reformation of life, a multitude of Jews, infidels, and bad Catholics. When Peter de Luna had terminated his legation, he invited Vincent to accompany him to the court of Clement VII.; but the Saint, not considering himself bound to yield to his desires, and seeing that he could accomplish greater good to souls, preferred to continue his preaching in Castile.

On his return to Valencia, he was nominated, contrary to his wishes, confessor to Violante, Queen of Aragon, consort of John I. He directed this princess with extreme prudence. She was a woman of a lively disposition and of varied talents, but imperious, greedy of power, and desirous of having the whole world at her feet; she governed her royal spouse, whose whole conduct was the result of her counsels. Yet she submitted with docility to the enlightened direction of St. Vincent, who essayed to inspire her with a contempt of the world and a love of heavenly things. The veneration which she

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conceived for her holy director was doubtless the means which Providence made use of to improve her. Vincent was not a cowardly flatterer in her regard, always ready to close his eyes to the faults of his penitent. An example related in the "Spiritual Instruction" for the seventh Friday before the Saint's Feast, shows that he knew how to reprimand her when she deserved it.

On the 1st of July, in the year 1391, the Jews of Valencia were led, by divers miraculous circumstances, to ask to be instructed in the Christian faith. The Bishop of that city appointed Vincent to instruct them. The greater part were converted, and their synagogue was transformed into a church dedicated to St. Christopher.

Shortly after this harvest of souls, Vincent returned into Catalonia, and repaired to the court of John I. who resided for a time in that province. He was made a Councillor of State and Grand Almoner to the King of Aragon, besides being confessor to the Queen Consort. He remained at court till the death of that prince, which occurred in the year 1396. These new honours were no bar to the Saint's apostolic zeal. He preached daily, and with equal success, in different places, including Cordova, whose inhabitants conceived so high a veneration for him, that they cut in pieces his religious mantle, and shared them with each other as sacred relics.

But while he thus exercised the ardour of his zeal in Aragon, Clement VII. died. Peter de Luna was elected Pope by the Cardinals of Avignon, and took the name of Benedict XIII. Two years following his election to the

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Supreme Pontificate, Benedict nominated his confessor, the Carmelite Jerome of Ochoa, to the Bishopric of Elne, in Roussillon, and chose Vincent to replace him. He despatched messengers with letters to request him to repair without delay to Avignon. The Saint obeyed, without replying to so formal an injunction, and hastened whither he, whom he regarded as Pope, called him. While journeying thither, he ceased not to preach to the people in the cities where he was obliged to stay.

Arrived at the court of Avignon (this was in 1396), St. Vincent was surrounded with the most flattering marks of esteem. Benedict, desirous of attaching the Saint to himself by other titles than that of Confessor, nominated him Master of the Sacred Palace, Grand Penitentiary, and his own private chaplain. In the midst of these exalted honours, the humble religious interrupted not his customary exercises of piety, his assiduous study of the Sacred Writings, and his preaching to the people. His exemplary life added great weight to his words. Amidst the luxury of the Papal Court, he practised the same austerities as if he had been in a regular convent, observing the same fasts, and prolonging equally his prayers and watchings. He preached less frequently, doubtless on account of his functions, but it was always with the same abundant fruit. At his voice, a crowd of sinners, weeping over their past iniquities, commenced a life of sincere penitence, and repaired with edifying piety the scandals they had given to the world.[1]

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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SECTION THE THIRD.

The Miraculous Apostolate of St. Vincent Ferrer. 1398–1419.

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST MIRACULOUSLY CALLS THE SAINT TO AN EXTRAORDINARY APOSTOLATE IN THE CHURCH—STATE OF CHRISTIANITY AT THE EPOCH WHEN ST. VINCENT RECEIVED HIS DIVINE MISSION.

NO sooner had he been installed in his new dignities, than the Saint sought, by every means at his command, to bring about a union of the faithful under one Supreme Head. He daily implored his illustrious penitent to relinquish his claims to the Papacy, so as to do away with the monstrous phenomenon of two heads over one body. At his instance, a large council of prelates, theologians, and canonists was gathered together to discuss the relative claims of the contending parties. With fair speeches Benedict showed himself well disposed, but artfully eluded all negotiation that was likely to terminate the difficulty; in consequence of which a number of his own cardinals abandoned his cause. Seeing that his efforts were useless to induce the Pope to lay aside the tiara, St. Vincent was seized with deep sorrow. He

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could no longer witness the evils that were crushing the Church without being moved to tears. His residence at the pontifical court was now a tax upon him, and he obtained permission to retire to a convent of his Order at Avignon. Such was his sorrow that he fell grievously ill; no remedies could diminish the intensity of the fever that consumed him, and for twelve days he lay at death's door. On the eve of the Feast of St. Francis, October 3rd, 1396, a crisis ensued which greatly alarmed those who surrounded his bed of suffering, for they believed that his last hour had come. But God was at that moment pleased to verify in His servant what He had spoken in the book of Job, chap. xi. 17: "When thou shalt think thyself consumed, thou shalt rise as the day-star." Suddenly the Saint's cell was flooded with a celestial light. Our Lord, accompanied by a multitude of angels and the glorious patriarchs, Dominic and Francis, presented Himself to the sufferer, saying: "Arise, and be consoled; the schism shall soon be at an end, when men have ceased from their iniquities. Arise, then, and go to preach against vice; for this have I specially chosen thee. Exhort sinners to repentance, for My judgment is at hand." Then our Lord promised him three favours: That he should be confirmed in grace; that he should be victorious over all the persecutions raised against him; and that in all his conflicts the Divine assistance should never fail him, and that after having preached the judgment throughout the greater part of Europe, with immense fruit to souls, he should terminate his life holily in a distant

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country. Finally, He instructed him in all that related to the exercise of his apostolic ministry. His biographers have not supplied us with details, but it is easy to conceive them from the admirable order invariably followed by the new Apostle in his miraculous calling. Ceasing to speak to the Saint, our Lord, in token of His love, touched him on the face with His right hand, and said to him a second time, "My Vincent, arise;" then He disappeared. The Divine touch produced its effect. Vincent suddenly felt himself cured, and his heart was filled with ineffable consolation.

This marvellous apparition, recorded by the oldest biographers of the Saint, is all the more worthy of belief inasmuch as St. Vincent himself confirmed it in a letter which he wrote to Benedict XIII. fifteen years later. Writing to him in the third person, he says: "A religious was grievously ill, and he lovingly besought God to cure him and to enable him to preach His Divine Word frequently and ardently as he had been wont to do. While he was in prayer and fell asleep, St. Dominic and St. Francis appeared to him, praying at the feet of Jesus Christ and earnestly supplicating our Lord. After they had finished their prayer, Jesus Christ appeared with them to the religious, who lay stretched upon his bed of pain. He touched him on the cheek with His sacred hand as if caressing him, and at the same time made him clearly understand, in words which the soul alone heard, that he should traverse the world, preaching as an Apostle, as St. Dominic and St. Francis had done, and that his preaching before the

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coming of Antichrist would be to mankind a merciful occasion of repentance and conversion. At the touch of our Lord's hand this religious was completely cured of his malady. He at once joyfully undertook the apostolic legation with which he had been divinely entrusted. Divine Providence was pleased to confirm his mission not only by many miracles, as He had done that of Moses, but also by the authority of Holy Scripture, as in the case of St. John the Baptist, because he had need of these powerful helps, on account of the difficulty of his enterprise and the weakness of his own testimony."[1] The cell in which St. Vincent received so remarkable a favour and such a miraculous mission was converted into a chapel, which became the object of great devotion. It was destroyed in the revolution, together with the convent which enclosed it.

On the morning following his miraculous cure, Vincent presented himself before the Pope to obtain permission to leave the city for the purpose of preaching the Gospel throughout the kingdoms of Europe. But Benedict, unwilling to part with one whose popularity would doubtless benefit his own cause, still detained him at his court. The Saint humbly obeyed, well knowing that particular revelations ought always to be submitted to the control of God's Church, and deferred to a more favourable opportunity the execution of his project. For two years longer he discharged the duties of Master of the Sacred Palace, and served with an heroic patience and exemplary fidelity him whom he

[1] Ranzano, and all the other biographers of the Saint.

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looked upon as the veritable Vicar of Jesus Christ. To secure for the future his attachment to the cause of the Popes of Avignon, the Bishopric of Lerida and a Cardinal's hat were offered him. These honours Vincent courteously, but firmly, declined, saying, "It behoves me to execute the order which I have received from God, for God has commanded me to preach the judgment to all nations." One day, feeling sad at the resistance which Benedict still offered to his ardent desires, he prayed in tears before his crucifix and offered to God the sorrow of his soul. Our Lord consoled him with these words: "*Vade adhuc expectabo te.*" He clearly understood that he should no longer resist His solicitations. The Pontiff then allowed him to set out on his apostolic mission throughout Europe, and for that purpose granted him the fullest powers, which were afterwards confirmed by the Council of Constance, and by Pope Martin V.

St. Vincent commenced his new apostolate at Avignon, on the 25th November, 1398.

The Church of God had at that time a pressing need of the voice of an apostle, the voice of a saint, to rescue it from the deplorable state in which it existed. There arose, in the year 1378, a schism which divided the allegiance of the faithful between two contending Pontiffs, and, as if to complete the evil, a third rival sprung up in 1409, who asserted an equal claim to the supreme dignity of the Papacy. These unhappy divisions cooled by degrees the fervour of Christian people, and encouraged others in the commission of every species of

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crime with the hope of impunity. The wickedness of men had reached its summit. "No, I do not believe," exclaimed St. Vincent in one of his discourses, "that there ever existed in the world so much pomp and vanity, so much impurity, as at the present day; to find in the world's history an epoch so criminal, we must go back to the days of Noe and the universal deluge. The inns in the cities and villages are filled with persons of abandoned character; they are so numerous that the entire world is infected by them. . . Avarice and usury increase under the disguised name of contracts. Simony reigns among the clergy, envy among the religious. Gluttony prevails to such an extent in every rank of social life that the fasts of Lent, the vigils and Ember-days, are no longer observed. . . . In a word, vice is held in such great honour that those who prefer the service of God to that of the world are held up to scorn as useless and unworthy members of society."

But the worst feature of all in this unhappy state of affairs was that the pastors of souls, drawn from the path of duty by the schism and its consequences, no longer laboured with the necessary vigilance to reform their people. The Mahometans and Jews, especially in Spain, instigated by the spirit of evil, made frightful havoc among souls by infecting the country parishes as well as the cities with their superstitions, errors, and wicked example. The devil let loose upon the earth numerous heretics: Wycliffe and his noxious disciples; John Hus and Jerome of Prague, who were so justly

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condemned by the Council of Constance. Idolatry even ventured to raise its head once more on the shores of Europe, and threaten to bear off in triumph its deluded followers. There were but few preachers of the Gospel, while men versed in spiritual science were rarely to be met with. St. Vincent regarded this dearth of apostolic labourers as one of the greatest calamities of the age, and bitterly laments it in his "Treatise on the Spiritual Life." Naturally drawn into a state of indifference and evil, what was there to prevent men from becoming more and more corrupt, when they more frequently heard the voice which led them into depravity than the voice which ought to have incited them to good? The heretics profited by these evil dispositions to sow broadcast their errors among the faithful; the mountainous districts, into which preachers seldom went, became the principal theatres of their fatal exploits.

Sin had acquired so strong a hold upon the world, the fervour of the good had become so relaxed, the crimes of the wicked had risen to such an excess, that God's patient forbearance with His creatures was well-nigh worn out. The only remedy that could stem the torrent of iniquity was an universal repentance, capable of appeasing the Just and Sovereign Judge. Hence as the Lord sent of old the prophet Jonas to Nineve to convert its inhabitants by threatening them with God's anger, so at this epoch He sent His faithful servant Vincent into the whole world that he might preach the near approach of the terrible judgment; that, filling souls

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with a wholesome fear, they might open their eyes to see their danger, abandon their evil habits, embrace the yoke of penance, and thus avert the just chastisements of Heaven which their crimes merited.

It is in this light that Pope Pius II. exhibits St. Vincent Ferrer to our view in the Bull of his canonisation. We read therein these remarkable words: "In the countries of the west the number of Jews and infidels increased, who by their wealth and their culture of letters exercised a fatal influence. The last day, the terrible day of judgment, was almost forgotten, but Divine Providence was pleased to restore and beautify His Church by illustrious men. At a favourable moment He sent into the world, for the salvation of the faithful, Vincent of Valencia, of the Order of Friar Preachers, a skilful professor of sacred theology. He professed all knowledge of the eternal Gospel. Like a vigorous athlete, he rushed to combat the errors of the Jews, the Saracens, and other infidels; he was the Angel of the Apocalypse, flying through the heavens to announce the day of the last judgment, to evangelise the inhabitants of the earth, to sow the seeds of salvation among all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, and to point out the way of eternal life."[1]

"These words," observes Father Teoli, "perfectly express what St. Vincent Ferrer was during the last twenty years of his life—an Apostle,[2] and a great Apostle." The celebrated Lewis of Grenada boldly affirms of him: "After the first Apostles, Vincent is,

[1] Bull S. Ord. Præd., T. V. [2] Teoli.

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of all apostolical men, he who has gathered most fruit in God's vineyard." His contemporaries assert that he frequently had *eighty thousand* auditors.[1] He was already forty-nine years old when our Lord named him His legate to reform the world; and for the space of twenty years he acquitted himself of that sacred charge, traversing the whole of Europe, and converting to the faith in each city Jews, infidels, heretics, and sinners, by thousands.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. VINCENT'S MODE OF LIFE DURING HIS MIRACULOUS APOSTOLATE—THE METHOD EMPLOYED BY THE SAINT IN PREACHING.

ALTHOUGH provided with the fullest authorisations on the part of the Sovereign Pontiffs, St. Vincent would never preach in any place without the blessing and consent of the Bishop of the diocese, and the permission of the local Superiors of his Order. He imposed on himself the inflexible rule to travel always on foot, despite the distance, the difficulties of the route, and the severity of the seasons. It was only towards the latter years of his life that a painful wound in one of his legs obliged him to ride. But even in this he observed the spirit of simplicity and poverty. He refused the use of a horse, and chose rather to ride on a mean ass, that he might the more resemble the Saviour of men.

[1] Ran zano, Nicholas de Clémangis: "Multoties in sua prædicatione erat numerus audientium octingentorum millia hominum." According to Fathers Jerom, Borselli, and Engelgrave, there were even more.

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Before entering into any city he cast himself on his knees, then, raising his eyes towards heaven and shedding abundant tears, he prayed for the people to whom he was about to preach the judgment. His entry was ordinarily attended with much solemnity. The Bishop, clergy, magistrates, nobility, and a numerous crowd of people, came out to meet him. They conducted him under a canopy with honour equal to that of a royal personage, or rather of an apostle or an angel. They chanted with indescribable enthusiasm hymns, psalms, and sacred canticles. In the place where they met him a cross was planted to perpetuate the memory of that happy event. So great was the concourse of people at times that it was necessary to erect a wooden barrier to protect him from the multitude who eagerly pressed around him to see him, and even to touch him. In the midst of these wondrous triumphs, his humility remained ever the same; at such moments he had incessantly in his heart and on his lips those words of the Psalmist: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give glory" (Psalm cxiii. 1).

On arriving at any place his first care was to visit the principal church, to pour forth his fervent supplications before the Blessed Sacrament, and to commend to God his preaching; then turning to the people he would humbly ask them to afford hospitality to those of his company who might not be able to obtain a lodging at the public inns. When there was a convent of his Order in the city he always retired to it, unless the Bishop desired him to go to his palace, where he might

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be of greater use to the people. But in villages where his Order had no existence he chose to reside in a monastery of friars or with the curé. On his way to his lodgings he chanted with his companions the litany of the Blessed Virgin or some pious prayers.

Notwithstanding the fatigues of the journey, the Saint gave himself but little repose in the house where he abode. He continued his exercises in their accustomed order; he fasted, abstained, prayed, and read the Holy Scriptures. We have already observed that the Rule of the Friar Preachers does not bind under the penalty of sin, and we shall further add that, outside the convents, it admits of an almost general dispensation from the observances which constitute the monastic life; yet our Saint availed himself of no dispensation whatever, but adhered to the Rule with the fidelity of the most fervent novice. He observed all its austerities, and even added others. Thus he constantly wore a rough hair shirt; every night, before taking his collation, he disciplined himself to blood, and when too feeble to do this himself, he implored one of his companions, in the name of our Lord's Passion, to render him that service and not to spare him. He allowed himself only five hours' sleep; his bed was ordinarily the hard ground, or a few bundles of twigs; a stone, or a volume of the Holy Scriptures, served him for a pillow.

At daybreak, St. Vincent rose, confessed, and recited a portion of the Divine Office on his kness; then he went with his companions to the church to sing Mass. At the close of that solemn function, ascending the

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pulpit, which was surmounted by a canopy to protect him from the burning sun, and at the same time enable his voice to reach the extremity of his auditory, he yielded himself to the ardour of his zeal, and expounded, with irresistible power and divine eloquence the great truths of religion.

After the sermon he remained some time at the foot of the pulpit to bless the sick who were brought to him in large numbers, and whom he often miraculously cured. A bell summoned the people at that moment, and was called the *Bell of Miracles.*

When he had finished this work of charity, he retired with the priests, his companions, to hear the confessions of those whom he had converted, and remained thus occupied till midday, the hour of his repast. He spent the time between his frugal meal and vespers in spiritual reading, or meditating in silence; and after vespers preached again. The rest of the day was spent in hearing confessions, or in preaching to monks, nuns, or priests, wherever the Divine inspiration led him. Towards evening he told one of his companions to ring the *Bell of Miracles.* At that well-known sound the sick re-assembled in the church to receive their health. Evening closed in with a procession of penitents, who gave themselves publicly the discipline, and with that ceremony St. Vincent terminated the daily exercises of his ministry.[1]

This prince of preachers was endowed with every oratorical quality capable of impressing the multitude.

[1] Ranzano, Nider, Antist, Razzi, Diago, Vittoria, Miguel, &c.

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A pleasing exterior also weighed in his favour; he was of middle stature, well-proportioned, easy and dignified in manner, and of handsome countenance; his tonsure was formed of rich flaxen hair, which became slightly mixed with grey towards the end of his life; his forehead broad, majestic, and calm; his large dark eyes shone with the light of intelligence and modesty; in his youth he was of florid complexion, but his long mortifications imparted to his features an austere paleness, an unmistakeable sign of his penitential life. His appearance alone, when in the pulpit, sufficed to inspire all hearts with compunction, for his face was resplendent with sanctity and the virtues which accompanied it.

His expressive gestures were full of grace and energy, and corresponded naturally with his words. His voice, which was sonorous as a silver trumpet, adapted itself with marvellous effect to the necessity of the moment. Did he declaim against vice, his voice became loud and piercing, and struck terror into the hearts of his hearers. Did he exhort them to a love of God, the practice of virtue, or the desire of heaven, it immediately assumed a sympathetic accent, a tender sweetness which melted them to tears. When he spoke of our Lord's Passion, the sorrows of His Blessed Mother, or the souls in purgatory, that sad plaintive voice, broken at intervals by sighs, inspired deep reverence and lively compassion. The commencement of his discourse was usually marked by a grave, penetrating tone, capable of riveting the attention; while he finished in a tone that was most sweet and full of love. Frequently his countenance

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appeared as if on fire, but towards the end it became as white as snow.

These exterior gifts were worthily matched in our Saint by the qualities of his mind. We have already remarked in these pages that for a long space of time St. Vincent taught the sciences of philosophy and theology in the public schools; thanks to these occupations, and to the natural brightness of his intellect, he had laid up a large store of doctrine, and acquired a powerful mode of reasoning. His happy memory crowned his facility of speech; he knew the whole of the Scriptures by heart, while the opinions of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church were most familiar to him. He fertilised this precious ground by meditation while passing from city to city, and during the night prepared his discourse in a manner still more immediate.

But it was especially in prayer that the great Apostle of the fifteenth century found his sublime ideas, his tender sentiments, and that divine unction which inflamed his words. One of his auditors, being one day enraptured by the profound doctrine which he had expounded with as much clearness as warmth, asked him from what book he drew the marvellous erudition and original ideas of his discourses. St. Vincent showed him the crucifix: "See," he said, "the book whence I gather all that I preach, and in which I study my sermons." Indeed, profane literature never provided the Saint with matter for preaching. It was only the Scriptures, explained by the Fathers of the Church.

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Seldom did the examples and authorities of pagan authors rise to his lips. Jesus Christ has said: "Preach the Gospel;" but nowhere has He said: "Preach Ovid, or Virgil, or Horace." Such were his principles, and they were established on reason; for as a fountain cannot rise higher than the source which feeds it, so profane teaching, coming as it does from the earth, cannot rise above the level of the earth; while the Gospel enables both those who preach and those who receive it to ascend to heaven.

His clearness of style was, moreover, one of the Saint's greatest merits. It occurred to him sometimes to have to explain points of doctrine that were most abstruse and far removed beyond the ordinary intelligence; yet he did it with such a happy choice of words, that they who listened to him marvelled at finding that they understood in its naked sense what before appeared to surpass their intellectual capacity. An admirable appropriateness reigned in his expressions; they were elevated or simple, to suit the understanding of his hearers; by this means he pleased the educated and instructed the ignorant. When he addressed himself to the poor people, his language was wonderfully adapted to their turn of mind. He generally cited for their interest facts from the lives of the saints, or from the Fathers; in this way he secured their attention, while he also confirmed his own words by the authority of example. He would sometimes relate to them what he himself had witnessed, what he had done; and as it was impossible to doubt his testimony, he never brought

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himself on the scene without exciting their interest to the highest pitch.

He usually chose for his subject the last judgment, and the practical conclusions which he drew therefrom were repentance, the reformation of conduct, and a new life. One point on which he strongly insisted was the love of enemies. At that period hereditary hatreds not unfrequently armed whole cities and families against each other, which oftentimes resulted in cruel death. St. Vincent would not believe that he had done anything until he had publicly reconciled those whom enmity divided. His sermons were sometimes prolonged to an unusual length, for he would interrupt himself to give vent to the sighs and lamentations which his impassioned eloquence elicited from his audience. He paused at times to weep himself, and to calm his emotion; at other times to foretell some event, or to work a miracle. In a word, these interruptions were often caused by his ecstasies, and when the rapture had ceased he would take up the thread of his discourse as if nothing had occurred.

Such was St. Vincent Ferrer when in the pulpit.[1]

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE COMPANY WHICH FOLLOWED ST. VINCENT FERRER IN THE COURSE OF HIS MIRACULOUS APOSTOLATE—EXTRAORDINARY FRUITS PRODUCED BY THE SAINT IN PIOUS SOULS DURING THAT PERIOD.

MOVED by the miracles of our Lord, and desirous to hear His doctrine, a great multitude followed His footsteps to traverse Judea and Samaria, whither He went to preach the kingdom of God. It was a feeling akin to this that drew around St. Vincent certain persons, happy to follow him and to walk under his guidance in the path of salvation. The Saint felt it his duty to allow those persons to attach themselves to him. Their numbers failed not to increase; so that, in the course of time, there were thousands of devout pilgrims who associated themselves with him in his apostolic journeys.

But as all those who formed the retinue of our Lord in the days of His public life were not attached to His Divine Person in the same degree—for there was at first the Apostolic College, composed of twelve members; then the disciples to the number of seventy-two, with the holy women, who were not less devoted to the Son of God; and, finally, the rest of the multitude. Even so the followers of our Saint comprised three principal categories: the first consisted of religious of the Order of St. Dominic, seldom less than twelve; the second was composed of Tertiaries belonging to the same Order; and the third embraced a host of penitents,

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whose numbers sometimes swelled to the enormous figure of ten thousand. The first class, which responded so exactly to the College of the Apostles, was a sort of movable convent; with their holy master at their head, these religious formed, as it were, a system of spiritual stars of which he was the centre, and which revolved with him round the earth, shedding floods of light and warmth, making the flowers to blossom and the fruits to ripen for eternal life. To this first division were added many religious of divers Orders who had obtained permission of their Superiors and of the Holy See to accompany the Saint. There were also those of the secular clergy. The whole numbered about fifty coadjutors, whose learning and solid virtues were usefully employed for the salvation of souls. These priests and religious supplied the Saint's place both in the pulpit and the confessional when he was ill; they also assisted him in administering the sacrament of Penance to the people whom he converted. Moreover, to each one was given the sort of employment for which he was best suited. One wrote the letters, another catechised; this one was charged with the reconciliation of enemies, that with the direction of the pilgrims. A treasurer was also appointed to receive the alms of the faithful, with which he provided for the wants of the company, and the rest he distributed among the poor.

The second class, which consisted of large numbers of persons of both sexes whom he had clothed with the habit of the Third Order of St. Dominic—with

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the sanction of the Holy See and the Superiors of the Order—answered to the seventy-two disciples and the holy women. The third comprised the other laity, men and women, and represented the rest of the multitude who followed our Lord. Like the pilgrims of that period, all were clad in sombre garments as a sign of repentance and humility. They were arranged in two distinct bands, male and female, and maintained that order at all times both during the missions and on their journey. They travelled on foot, and with staves in their hands. The men were preceded by a picture of the Crucifixion, the women by a banner of the Blessed Virgin. The religious and secular clergy, separated from the laity, grouped themselves around the Saint. Their march was announced by the ringing of a bell, the same that gave the signal for the working of miracles. St. Vincent also took with him notaries public, whose duty it was to draw up forms of agreement between enemies whom he reconciled.

As soon as they entered a city, which was always done with perfect recollection and becoming order, the men charged to provide for the material wants of the company sought out the families who were willing to receive one or more of the pilgrims, then they conducted the latter to the house where they were to receive hospitality. They applied only to ladies of irreproachable character. Generally speaking, the directors of the company in seeking lodgings for the pilgrims were embarrassed in their choice. The people contended who should afford them shelter, for their edifying life seemed to bring a blessing

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on the house which received them. They paid all their own expenses; but frequently their hosts would receive nothing from them, esteeming themselves abundantly recompensed by their good example and holy conversation.

Indeed, the heroic virtues practised by these devout pilgrims was a sight which spoke to the eye with as much unction and eloquence as the sermons of the Saint did to the ear; for it embraced both the precept and example of Christian piety. This numerous staff accelerated the religious movement. Some instructed the ignorant, others gave to each one in particular the counsel which St. Vincent gave to all in general. They incited all to a prompt imitation of their example, and imparted to the great exercises of religion a pomp and enthusiasm which gradually won the heart by its salutary touch.

The Saint prescribed wise regulations both for the admission of the faithful into this holy company, and for their manner of life. Persons of doubtful reputation were rejected. Public sinners were required to have performed beforehand the most rigorous public penance, and that they should still form a section apart from the rest, and be called *Disciplinants;* among these were to be found many who had once been notorious sinners, but who now expiated their crimes by edifying austerities. Confession and communion were customary at least once a week. This double practice contributed to unite hearts to God by the closest ties, and to bind together the members of society with the cords of Christian charity.

This numerous band, ten thousand in all, was com-

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posed of persons of every rank in life; the noble and plebeian, the learned and ignorant, priests, and people of different nationalities, different tastes and temperaments. Yet there reigned among them such perfect peace and charity, that they exhibited to the world a faithful picture of the primitive Church. It might have been said of them that they had but one heart and one soul. The example of St. Vincent bound together this great brotherhood; the great supported the little with admirable patience, while the latter requited their condescension by their profound respect. The heads of the different divisions of the community put aside their own individual interests, and had but one desire—the well-being of all.[1]

The wonderful preaching of the Saint produced immense fruit in the world, both among the good and the wicked. The one became more holy, the other were converted. When St. Vincent died, the state of souls in the Church had undergone a complete transformation.

Among the virtuous souls whom our Saint led to the summit of perfection we may cite, in the first place, the companions and coadjutors of his apostolate. The principal were:

1. Blessed Antony Fuster, of our Order. This man had a remarkable talent for appeasing enmities. St. Vincent having preached at Vich, in Catalonia, to a population torn by faction, left this Father there, who happily terminated the work begun by himself. Blessed Antony compelled the inhabitants of that town to re-

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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nounce their projects of vengeance, and united in mutual affection those whom anger separated. Shortly after this general reconciliation he went to receive in heaven the reward of his apostolic labours.

2. Blessed Geoffrey of Blanes, of the same Order. This blessed Father was possessed of great eloquence. Many Bishops and Archbishops, in order to attract the faithful to his fruitful preaching, accorded divers indulgences to those who should assist at his sermons or his Mass. History exhibits him as having a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who frequently appeared to him. In life, and after death, he wrought a great number of miracles. He died at Barcelona, in the year 1414.

3. Blessed Peter Cerdan, also of the Order of Friar Preachers. When he joined the company of the Saint he was simple and illiterate. But when his spiritual master died he seemed to have inherited his eloquence. He preached with such talent and animation, that he astonished all those who knew him. He died in 1422, in the city of Graus, in Catalonia. At the moment when he expired on his bed of vine-branches, his usual couch, the bells began to ring of themselves, and a heavenly light surrounded his sacred remains. His body was carefully kept, and several solemn translations of it took place. He was always honoured with public worship in the church of his Order, and the cure of many sick persons is attributed to his intercession.

4. Blessed Blase of Auvergne, who generously renounced his rich patrimony to enter the Order of Friar

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Preachers. He made great progress in virtue under the guidance of our Saint. God even favoured him with great miracles. He died after the canonisation of his master. His relics were preserved in the Convent of Sisteron, in Provence, where the worship of the saints has always been rendered to him.

5. Blessed Peter Quéralt, another Dominican. He shone with great glory in the company of St. Vincent. His life was prolonged till the year 1462. His body, having been buried in the Convent of Lerida, in Spain, remained entire until the wars of 1708, when it was cut in pieces by the soldiers.

6. Blessed John of Alcoy, and Peter of Maya, also of the Order. They were the first to join St. Vincent Ferrer. Thus were they his most dear disciples; they replaced him when he was ill; they were penetrated with his spirit, excelled in preaching, and both rose to the highest degree of sanctity.

7. The Ven. John of Gentilpré. He studied at Toulouse in 1417, when, won by the Saint's preaching, he, with two others, took the habit of the Friar Preachers and joined his company. He asked of God the grace to preach daily, and to die preaching. On the day of his death, the religious and several seculars surrounded his bed; he summoned all his strength, spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and died in the middle of this last exhortation.

8. The Ven. Martin of Vargas, a Cistercian, the reformer of the Convent of Piétra, and of most of the monasteries of his Order in Spain.

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9. Blessed John Gilabert, of the Order of Mercy. Obedience to the Saint's command caused him to leave his company; on arriving at the gate of the monastery to which he was assigned, he gave up his soul. His death was revealed to St. Vincent, who offered the Holy Sacrifice for him, and preached a panegyric on his virtues.

What especially merits our attention is, that a great number of those who piously followed the Saint in his apostolic journeys entered the Order of Friar Preachers or other religious Orders. Abandoning the world and their riches for the love of God, they peopled the monasteries of men and women. Schools and families suffered from these multiplied vocations. The impulse was universal—all desired to enter the cloister.

St. Vincent did not neglect the religious communities in the course of his apostolate. After his public discourses he preached to the inmates of monasteries. It would be impossible to describe his zeal for regular observance and the perfection of their state. Every time that he returned to Valencia, for example, he never failed to visit the Convent of the Sisters of St. Dominic, where he had a a great number of spiritual daughters, and each time animated them by his discourses to redouble their fervour in the service of God.

We shall crown this chapter with the names of four illustrious personages whom St. Vincent Ferrer inspired with a distaste for the world and the love of God, and who, embracing the perfect life in the cloister, sanctified themselves therein. The first is the Saint's brother, Blessed Boniface Ferrer, who, becoming a widower,

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entered by his advice the Order of the Chartreux; he merited by his virtues to be elected General of the Order, and was esteemed a saint. Then there is St. Bernardine of Sienna, whom, in an interview, St. Vincent advised to join the Order of St. Francis, and whose future success in regard to souls he publicly foretold. There is also Blessed Margarite, Princess of Savoy, whom the Saint received to the habit of the Third Order of St. Dominic, and whose sanctity has been recognised by the Church. And lastly, Blessed Agnes of Moncada, a poor florist, whom one of his sermons determined to vow perpetual virginity to God, and who, following a special inspiration, like Magdalen retired to an unknown grotto, where after her death God manifested her sanctity by striking prodigies.[1]

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNIVERSAL CONVERSION WHICH THE MIRACULOUS APOSTOLATE OF ST. VINCENT FERRER PRODUCED IN THE CHURCH—ITS ABUNDANT FRUITS AMONG HERETICS AND JEWS.

GOD alone knows the number of souls whom our Saint led from sin to penance by a daily course of preaching extending over a period of twenty years. But if we may judge by the exterior signs which everywhere accompanied his presence, we can easily conceive that there would be very few persons, who were privileged to see and to hear him, and could still resist the efficacy of his influence on their souls.

[1] The Saint's biographers, especially Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 1, 2, 3.

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And how was it possible to remain insensible to his touch? He preached with such energy, such vivacity and vigour, that he no longer appeared an old man broken down by age and infirmity, but a youthful herald of the Gospel fired with an impetuous ardour. He could be heard at a great distance round; and he was understood by people of every nation, although he spoke only the Valencian dialect. His sudden display of energy during his preaching was as a miracle which enraptured his hearers. On leaving the pulpit, he became feeble, weary, and infirm; his countenance was pale, his walk slow, and he had need of the assistance of some one to support his steps. No one would have supposed him to be the same individual, nor could it be doubted that the Holy Spirit worked in him during his discourse to reanimate his enfeebled body, and to produce in him this marvellous energy.

Another cause of success was the gift of miracles, which he possessed in a rare degree. They were of daily occurrence. Wherever he went he restored health to a great number of sufferers whose bodily cure was despaired of. We may well imagine then the impression which this wonderful spectacle so often repeated would everywhere produce. He moved rapidly from place to place, so great was his eagerness to evangelise the whole of Europe; but the prodigies which he daily accomplished left indelible traces in the hearts of all. The procession of *Disciplinants* was, moreover, capable of itself of softening the most hardened souls. It took place every evening, at sunset, notwithstanding the state of the weather, in rain,

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snow, wind, and tempest. It consisted of persons of every condition, the nobility and the common people, great and small, even children from four to five years old, who were not afraid to scourge themselves, in order to expiate the sins of the people. They walked two and two with naked feet, their faces veiled, clad in sackcloth, and their shoulders bared in such a manner as not to offend against modesty. Each penitent scourged himself with a discipline, meditating on the Passion of our Lord. Their blood flowed, and, carried away by the impetuosity of their fervour, some even went so far as to cut their flesh in pieces by the violence of the blows. And yet, strange as it may appear, none of these austere penitents ever suffered in their health at the close of this exercise. The Saint himself alluded to it, in order to show how agreeable to God was this sensible display of penance; in the space of twelve years, not a single death occurred among those who formed the special company of *Disciplinants*.

While this procession traversed the streets of the city, women of disreputable character assembled in the church, and one of St. Vincent's companions preached to them on sin, repentance, and hell. Few of these unhappy women resisted the pressing exhortations that were addressed to them. They were seen on the following day to break asunder the ties which bound them to vice, and to take part in the procession of public penance.

What was the result of all this? This: that from the moment of St. Vincent's entry into a city, it immediately wore the appearance of Nineve when Jonas

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preached penance to it. People wept when they heard the Saint's Mass, but their tears were most abundant when he exhorted them to repentance. It was then that sighs, groanings, and lamentations filled the air. It might have been thought that each one mourned the death of a first-born, or of a father or a mother. The squares and the plains which were covered by his auditory gave an idea of the universal judgment; it was, in fact, like the future terror and lamentation of all the tribes of the earth gathered together in the valley of Josaphat. But, as Nicholas de Clémangis, an eye-witness, observes, the most lukewarm souls, and hearts of stone, were softened, and gave vent to their sorrow in tears and accents of the bitterest anguish.

We may moreover picture to ourselves the extraordinary confluence of people. The Saint's auditory was not composed solely of the inhabitants of the city where he preached. There were frequently gathered around his pulpit more than fifty thousand people, even when he preached in small villages. They gladly went several leagues to hear him. During his sermon all the artizans abandoned their labour, and the merchants their warehouses. In cities where there were schools the masters suspended their lectures. Neither the inclement season, wind, nor rain prevented the multitudes from collecting in the public squares where the Saint was to preach. The sick who had sufficient strength to walk left the hospitals, others were carried; all hoped that their bodies as well as their souls would be cured at the same time, and this hope was frequently realised.

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We may form some idea from the following fact, of the eagerness with which he inspired the people for penance: wherever St. Vincent went, the squares and other public places were invaded by pedlers whose commerce consisted solely in disciplines, hair-cloth, iron chains, sackcloth, and other instruments of mortification.

We shall relate in the "Spiritual Instructions" which follow, many interesting examples of great sinners converted. As to the general fruits of his apostolate, we will quote from an authentic document, a letter written by the Council of Orihuela to the Bishop of Carthagena, in Spain: "The arrival of Vincent Ferrer has produced immense good in this country; it has been a grand occasion of salvation to all the faithful. This city in particular, at the close of his preaching, and by God's grace, is delivered from every vice and public sin. There is no one, great or small, who dares to swear by the Holy Name of God, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, or to utter any other oath. Cards and dice are abolished. . . . No one ventures to conjure, cast lots, explain signs, or consult fortune-tellers and sorcerers. . . . All noisy entertainments have been given up. . . . The people of this city have never confessed so frequently as at the present moment; the priests are insufficient to hear the confessions and give communion. On Sundays and Feasts of Obligation all . . . . go to Mass with devotion such as no one could believe, much less expect to witness. Before the arrival of Master Vincent, the churches were large; now they are small. . . . There no longer exist in

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this city either offences, or rancour, or enmity against any one; but each one, spontaneously, and for God's honour, pardons the other. We have counted more than one hundred and twenty-three reconciliations; sixty-six deaths and a host of broken limbs have been pardoned. Now every one lives in peace and concord.[1] In the great city of Toulouse, all the women of abandoned character have renounced their disorders." [2]

In St. Vincent's time heresy took refuge in the high valleys of the Pyrenees and the Alps. These were the strongholds of the Albigenses, Vaudois, Cathari, and the Paterini, who, compelled by the united power of the Church and of the temporal princes to quit the cities and plains, went forth to find in those inaccessible retreats the fatal liberty of error. St. Vincent's zeal led him to climb the mountains that he might carry the torch of faith among the unhappy people who inhabited them. In the process of his canonisation it is related that, at the close of only one discourse at Perpignan, an incalculable number of heretics embraced the true faith. This one fact alone gives us the measure of his success in the Pyrenees. As to the Alps, we are told that he traversed them in an almost incredibly short space of time. On the French declivity he undertook the conversion of three valleys in the diocese of Embrun, where heresy and the corruption of morals had made the greatest ravages. Accompanied by his faithful band of *Disciplinants* and pious pilgrims he penetrated into these valleys, till then

[1] 4 Mars, 1411. P. Vidal, "Vie du Saint," liv. ii. c. 13.
[2] 1417. Ibid., liv. iii. c. 2.

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rebellious to the Word of God. The Saint's renown and the fame of his miracles brought crowds of heretics to his sermons. A few days only sufficed to work a change in their hearts and to soften their obduracy. There were, however, many who viewed with bitter jealousy this general enthusiasm, and sought to slay him. Three times they attempted to execute their wicked design, but three times also did the visible protection of God shield him from their malice. Despairing then of ridding themselves of the presence of the preacher, these deluded people came in their turn to hear his sermons. God's grace drew them thither; they were more deeply moved than the rest, and in a short time gave unequivocal signs of a sincere conversion. Wicked customs and gross superstitions soon disappeared from those valleys; they embraced the true faith, and submitted with docility to the Church's discipline. The most criminal of them repaired so effectually the scandals it had given, that it ceased to be called Valpourrie,[1] and was henceforth known only by the name of Valpure.

Most of the valleys on the Italian descent of the Alps were also inhabited by heretics, especially in the diocese of Turin. St. Vincent visited them in order, preaching in each of them the Catholic truth, and attacking error with vigorous and irresistible energy. By the mercy of God, they each received the Divine Word with much ardour, piety, and respect. The Saint's learning, his fervour, and miracles opened the eyes of all. He observed that the chief cause of error and heresy was the total absence of

[1] Valputa.

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preaching. He gathered from the inhabitants of the country that for thirty years no one had preached to them except Vaudois who came regularly among them twice a year. In the vale of Loferio, he reclaimed the Bishop of that poor erring flock; in that of Angrogne he destroyed the schools in which the ministers of error were educated; at Val-du-Pont he led the Cathari to renounce their abominations; at Val-de-Lanz he converted the descendants of the murderers of St. Peter Martyr. He discovered in the diocese of Geneva a gross and wide-spread error. It was customary to celebrate every year on the day following Corpus Christi, a feast in honour of the Orient, and confraternities were established under the name of St. Orient.[1] No preacher dared to declaim against this monstrous error; the religious and the secular clergy were threatened either with death or the withdrawal of offerings and alms. But St. Vincent was above all such servile fear, he spoke freely against this abuse, and effectually put a stop to it. He found matters in a still more lamentable state in the diocese of Lausanne, where the peasantry were wont to offer an idolatrous worship to the sun. He instructed them in the worship of God and put to flight all such superstitious practices.

St. Vincent's mission was not less fruitful among the Jews than among heretics. He converted an incalculable number of them. God seemed to have accorded him a special grace for the conversion of a people who

[1] There was a striking resemblance between the St. Orient of the Albigenses and the Grand-Orient of modern Freemasonry.

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are proverbially hostile to the Christian name. There was at that period a population of Jews both numerous and powerful in Spain. The process of his canonisation shows that in the space of thirteen months he converted twenty thousand in Castile alone; that in the year 1415, within six months, more than fifteen thousand were led to embrace the true faith in Aragon and Catalonia, and that on another occasion in the same country over thirty thousand were baptised at the close of his preaching. The historians of the sect do not hesitate to confirm these facts by their own testimony. In a work entitled "Juchasin," it is related that in the year 1412 a Friar named Brother Vincent having preached to the Jews, the latter renounced their law to the number of more than two hundred thousand.

The Saint had an ardent zeal and tender love for these unhappy wanderers. In the cities where he found them, he took care that a place should always be reserved for them, and after his exhortations he treated them with much consideration. These acts full of sweetness gained their hearts. The learning of the great preacher completed their conviction, and they presented themselves in a body to receive holy baptism. Thus at Perpignan seventy families embraced the Christian faith. In other places whole synagogues abjured their errors. Their place of meeting was changed into a church. In Castile, they were so unanimously converted that none remained, and the Bishop of Palencia saw himself deprived of a large revenue, produced by a special impost on them. Among the Jews whom St. Vincent brought to the

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Divine Messiah, many of them in their turn became the apostles of their co-religionists. Thus one of them, who was afterwards raised to the Episcopate, had the satisfaction of making forty thousand proselytes among his fellow-countrymen.

CHAPTER IX.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESS OF ST. VINCENT FERRER AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF MAHOMET—THE PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES AND CITIES IN WHICH THE SAINT PREACHED IN THE COURSE OF HIS MIRACULOUS APOSTOLATE.

THE Mahometans, like the Jews, were spread throughout different parts of Spain. In proportion as the noble-hearted Spaniards recovered possession of their provinces which had been subjugated by Saracen invasion, they re-established Christianity in all its rights, and favoured by every means in their power the conversion of the followers of Mahomet, who dwelt in the country. There were many, however, who resisted this influence. Like the Jews, they were possessed of wealth and industry; it was necessary, therefore, to deal gently with them. St. Vincent laboured with all his might to reclaim them from their unclean errors; he spared neither suffering nor fatigue to lead them to the saving waters of baptism. And to this end, wherever he preached he compelled the Mahometans, by the king's order, to be present at his discourses, reserving for them, as in the case of the Jews, the most convenient places.

But why constrain such people to hear him, since the

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law of Mahomet especially forbids his disciples to listen to Christian sermons? "This," said the Saint, "is one of the wicked artifices of this Antichrist, by which he directly closes the door of salvation to his followers. The Divine Word is the first condition of the success of the Gospel. He who hears it is easily drawn as by a kind of necessity to embrace the holy faith, provided it be announced with becoming dignity."

The Saracen King of Grenada, Mahomet Aben-Baha, moved by the renown of his miracles, was desirous to see St. Vincent, and to afford him liberty to preach in his kingdom. He therefore sent ambassadors to him, as to a prince, who informed him that he would have unrestricted license to announce the Gospel throughout the kingdom of Grenada. The Saint was then in the neighbourhood of Genoa, in Italy. He forthwith set out on foot to Marseilles, where a vessel was placed at his service. A favourable wind soon brought him to the port of Andalusia. On the morning following his arrival at Grenada, St. Vincent commenced a course of sermons in presence of the king, his whole court, and innumerable people. The Mahometans, unaccustomed to hear discourses addressed to a great multitude, were filled with astonishment and admiration. Such was the effect of his preaching that, after three sermons, eighteen thousand Moors were converted to the Christian faith. St. Vincent promised himself an abundant harvest in this new field of labour; but the enemy of mankind sought to stifle its growth by sowing therein the seeds of discord. Aben-Baha himself, with his whole court,

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had resolved to receive baptism; but the chiefs of the Mussulman superstition, determining at any cost to impede so great a good, menaced him with revolt, civil war, and the subversion of his throne. "If you embrace the Gospel," said they, "your subjects who believe in the Koran will never consent to be ruled by a prince who has abjured the law of Mahomet to become a Christian." Aben-Baha feared to lose a perishable crown of the earth. Dismayed by the threats of those fanatics, he called St. Vincent to him, and bade him depart from his kingdom, assuring him of his own personal esteem of him. "Return," said he, "into the countries of the Christians, and do so speedily, lest you oblige me to have recourse to violent measures against you. I should do it with regret, but I cannot allow you to remain." The Saint would gladly have exposed himself to persecution and death; the thought of martyrdom filled him with joy; but he was unwilling to excite the anger of the Mussulmans against the new converts, or to expose them to the danger of apostacy.

He, therefore, quitted the kingdom of Grenada, beseeching God to destroy in that country the reign of the crescent, and to establish in its stead that of the glorious Cross. A century later and the desires of the Saint were accomplished. Grenada was in its turn conquered, and the barbarous Mussulman was driven back to the shores of Africa. We may not unreasonably suppose that the band of converts formed by our Saint increased as years rolled by, and that when the missionaries of the Gospel arrived in that country they

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would find the hearts of its people better disposed to embrace the great truths of Christianity.

St. Vincent's zeal did not slacken in consequence of these accidents. Some time later, when an opportunity occurred to him, he resolved to go into Africa to preach to the people of Mauritania and to the Arabs of the Desert; but circumstances independent of his own will interfered with the accomplishment of this grand project. He, however, indemnified himself by labouring with renewed ardour for the conversion of the Mussulmans who were established in Christian countries. Ranzano, one of the Saint's biographers, relates that eighty thousand of those infidels were brought to the true faith. This is a high figure, and far exceeds the number given by Father Teoli, whose account appears to be more reliable, since in comparing the number of Jewish conversions with that of the Mahometans, the latter is found to be considerably less.

But to resume the thread of our narrative. St. Vincent was truly another St. Paul, sent by God to bring back to the faith of Christ a multitude of Jews and Mahometans, to convert innumerable sinners, and to harmonise the faithful of every nation and condition of life in the most perfect bonds of Christian fellowship. We are thus able to see at a glance the general effect of the miraculous apostolate which he received from Christ Himself at Avignon. The Saint was not afraid to affirm it with his own lips. In one of his sermons which he preached in Castile, in the year 1411, we read thus: "The end of the world cannot be far distant, and the

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kingdom of God is at hand. Has not our Lord Himself said that the bearing of the fig-tree foreshadows the coming summer? Behold, then, the fig-tree of the Christian people. Each day records its reconciliations, and we witness souls forgetting and forgiving the greatest injuries. The delicate, sensual, and vicious do penance. Obstinate sinners are converted, and approach frequently the Sacraments. Nor is the Jewish fig-tree any longer barren; for we see it daily producing its abundant and choicest fruits in every city in Spain." He might have added heretics and Mussulmans likewise. Truly, then, St. Vincent exercised in the Church an apostolate such as never was witnessed since the establishment of the Gospel.[1]

St. Vincent having evangelised Avignon and the neighbouring towns, set out on foot for Spain, preaching in divers places where he was obliged to stay.

It was at Graus, in Catalonia, that he instituted the procession of *Disciplinants*, and laid the foundation of that marvellous company of pious souls who accompanied him in his apostolic journeyings. Here also he left behind him, as a souvenir, a crucifix which the inhabitants begged of him, and which became the instrument of many miracles.

From Graus, the Saint went to Barcelona, a city which he frequently visited, and where he was always received with extraordinary respect. On one of these visits he beheld the guardian angel of the city, and on his

[1] See the Saint's biographers, but especially Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

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relating the occurrence to the inhabitants, they constructed, near the gate where he had this vision, a chapel dedicated to this heavenly protector.

While at Cerveva, St. Dominic appeared to Vincent in his cell, to encourage him in the execution of our Lord's commands. The Saint preached everywhere with extraordinary success, God confirming his words by striking prodigies.

In the beginning of the year 1400, our illustrious preacher quitted Catalonia, and following the southern coast of France, arrived in Provence. Aix and Marseilles heard his voice. He announced in like manner the good news of salvation in many small towns and villages; and that no one might be deprived of it, he sent priests of his company into the places where he could not himself go.

Having preached the Lent of 1402 at Marseilles, Vincent went to Romans for an interview with Father John de Puynoix, General of the Order, to lay before him the plans of his mission, and to solicit his paternal blessing. The Father-General sanctioned his proceedings, exhorted him to pursue his vocation till death, and lovingly blessed so worthy a subject.

It was then that Vincent journeyed into the valleys of the diocese of Embrun, and entirely transformed them. He passed thence from the side of the Alps into Piedmont and Lombardy, then into the state of Genoa. In 1403, he was in the Marquisate of Montferrat. Crossing again the Alps, he was at the close of that year at Chambray, where he founded a convent of

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Friars of his Order. In 1404, he preached the Lent at Lausanne. Towards the end of August he quitted Switzerland. On the 6th September he was at Lyons, where he preached for fourteen days with extraordinary results. After traversing the whole of Lyonnais, Vincent arrived in Lorraine, and passed from thence into Flanders.

While preaching in the latter country, Benedict XIII. enjoined him to accompany him to Genoa, where he was to hold a conference with the Italian cardinals, with reference to putting an end to the schism. Vincent obeyed his orders. But learning on the route that the journey to Genoa was deferred till the spring of 1405, he stayed in Auvergne. The city of Claremont heard his exhortations during Advent and Lent.

In the month of May, 1405, he was at Genoa with Benedict XIII. There he beheld with sorrow every effort that was made to extinguish the schism rendered abortive. Nothing remained to him then but to evangelise the population, and he traversed the coast of the state of Genoa. At Savone he received an embassy of the Mussulman King of Grenada, who invited him to preach the kingdom of God in his capital. We have already related how he yielded to this request, the extraordinary success of his preaching among the Mahometans, the jealousy of the chiefs of the false religion, and the obligation he was under of abandoning a harvest already so ripe. These events occurred in the year 1406.

On leaving Grenada, St. Vincent pursued his apostolic missions in Andalusia. The whole city of Baéza

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was converted by his preaching; Ezija and Seville profited no less thereby.

Thence he passed into Castile. Here he received letters and ambassadors from Henry IV., King of England, who entreated him to come into Great Britain to evangelise its people. St. Vincent, whose charity would willingly have embraced the whole world, joyfully accepted the king's proposal, and arriving at San Sebastian, a port in the Gulf of Gascony, he was conveyed to England in a vessel sent expressly to bring him. He arrived in the summer of the year 1406. The indefatigable apostle remained over a year in these islands, preaching throughout the kingdom, and producing the same results as in his other missions. Having thus evangelised England, Scotland, and Ireland, he returned into France towards the autumn of 1407.

He would doubtless travel by sea to Bordeaux, since historians speak of him as passing from England into Gascony. He went thence into Picardy and Poitou. In 1408, he preached during Lent in Auvergne; then he crossed the Pyrenees to preach once more throughout Spain. A record of that period notices that he journeyed from one country to another on horseback. He had then a wound in the leg which tortured him during the last eleven years of his life. Yet his sufferings in no way hindered him from pursuing his apostolate: the happiness of labouring for the salvation of souls made him forgetful of suffering. Having passed through the north of Spain—where in Cuença and Molina he was pained at witnessing the barren effects of his preaching—he

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arrived at Perpignan, where Benedict XIII. had convoked a council. The obstinacy of Peter de Luna paralysed the good results of that assembly. Grieved at the unhappy dispositions of the Pontiff, Vincent resumed the course of his preaching till he reached Montpellier, and after a fruitful mission, returned once more to Perpignan. There he received letters from the King of Aragon, dated the 22nd January, 1409, who called him to Barcelona to confer with him on business of importance. In obeying the summons of that prince, Vincent availed himself of the opportunities which the journey afforded him, to preach at Elne, Girone, and Vich. Arrived at Barcelona in the month of June, 1409, he was not content with attending the king in council, but continued his apostolic preaching, which produced marvellous fruits. Towards the end of the same year a vessel conveyed him into Tuscany. He travelled through the dioceses of Pisa, Lucca, Florence, and Siena, everywhere converting sinners and reviving Christian piety. At the commencement of the year 1410 he returned to Barcelona, and traversed once more the whole of Catalonia and Aragon. It was at this epoch that he instituted a university at Valencia, his native city. He came thence into Castile. At Salamanca he raised a woman to life, to prove to his auditory that he was himself the angel precursor of the judgment, announced in the Apocalypse. This miracle is related in detail in the "Spiritual Instruction," for the fifth Friday before the Saint's Feast. The succession to the throne of King James of Aragon, who died childless, led him to return

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to Barcelona. He was constrained to occupy himself with this affair, and after many negotiations full of patience and wisdom, he turned it to the advantage of his country. In 1413 St. Vincent evangelised the Balearic Isles. In 1414 he went to Tortosa, where he converted many Jews. Then he returned to Saragossa, and remained there till the beginning of the year 1415, preaching with much fruit. He was a second time drawn by the Spirit of God towards central Italy, and so great was the success of his apostolate, especially in Bologna, that its inhabitants were pleased to accord him the title of citizen. Returning thence into Spain, he was speedily summoned to the Congress of Perpignan, in which the obstinancy of Peter de Luna showed itself more strongly than ever. St. Vincent was so deeply afflicted that he fell grievously ill. The glorious confessor, refusing medical succour, placed his entire confidence in our Lord. Jesus Christ appeared to him, consoled him, cured him, and announced to him that he should yet visit divers countries.

The Congress of Perpignan was fatal to Peter de Luna. Through the advice of the Theologians, and of St. Vincent in particular, the King of Aragon detached himself from his obedience, and from that moment the cause of the union was accomplished.

The king's edict was published on the 6th January, 1416.[1]

Our Saint spent the beginning of this year in travelling through many provinces of Aragon to withdraw the people

[1] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. iii. *per totum.*

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from obedience to Benedict XIII., and to attach them to that of the Council of Constance, an undertaking by no means easy, considering the long period in which those countries had lived under the spiritual dominion of Peter de Luna. But to all their prejudices the Saint opposed solid reasons which carried conviction to every mind. In a short time Spain, as well as Italy and the rest of Christendom, awaited with submission the choice of the Council of Constance, ready to acknowledge the elect of the Council as the veritable Vicar of Jesus Christ.

The King of Aragon, well knowing how advantageous to the interests of the Church would be the presence of St. Vincent, entreated him to repair to Constance in quality of his theologian. But the latter declined this honour, believing it was better to follow the extraordinary mission which God had confided to him. He then went into Languedoc. At the end of January, 1416, history points to him at Carcassonne. From there he went to Bésziers and Montpellier; then retracing his steps, he preached throughout Roussillon. In the month of March he passed again into the diocese of Carcassonne, and that year celebrated the Festival of the Annunciation at Montolieu, where he wrought the miraculous cure recorded in the "Spiritual Instruction" for the first Friday preceding the Saint's Feast.

From Montolieu, Vincent journeyed onwards to Toulouse. Two Fathers of his Order awaited him at Castanet. He entered the city on the Friday before Palm-Sunday, amidst pompous solemnities, and was received as an angel from heaven. In the evening of

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his arrival a procession of public penance took place. The number of those who took part in it was extraordinary. Besides the grown-up people, there were three hundred little children, who scourged their tender shoulders with the discipline.

We may judge, by those prognostics, of the immense good which the preaching of St. Vincent Ferrer would produce in Toulouse. There especially were realised the marvellous fruits of which we have given but a feeble description in the seventh article of this section. The sermons lasted a month; but their results were as abundant as though the Saint had preached a whole year. The priests of the city, and the religious who accompanied Vincent in his missions, hardly sufficed to receive the confessions of those that were converted. They who had enriched themselves by fraud and injustice restored their ill-gotten gains; they who had long scandalised the city by the publicity of their crimes were desirous to edify it by public repentance. The penances that were imposed on these great sinners did not seem to them sufficient; but they believed themselves bound to the severest expiation. All the women of ill-fame abandoned their disorders, and gave unequivocal and consoling proofs of the sincerity of their conversion.

The Saint left behind him in the city the greater part of the pious women who had followed him till then. They dwelt together in community, and observed the rules which he gave them.

On the 3rd May, Vincent quitted Toulouse. He was

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accompanied as far as Portet, where he gave a short mission, and then went on to Muret. Having held a station in that town, he passed into the district of Caraman. From thence he repaired to Saïx and Castres. In the latter city he received an express invitation from the Fathers of the Council of Constance to join them; the invitation being transmitted to him by an emissary of the King of Aragon. When this was notified to him, he started in the direction of the city where the Council was sitting, but travelled by short stages in order to preach to the people whom he might encounter on the journey.

He reached Alby on the 28th May, 1416, and preached there eight days. Then traversing the country, he visited Gaillac, Cordes, Najac, and arrived on the 22nd June at Villefranche du Rouergne, where he gave a mission of five days. After that he went to Rodez. Tradition says he preached in a large meadow of the Priory of St. Felix, which is not far distant. He passed thence across the mountains of Auvergne to reach by a direct route Puy-en-Vélay. In the latter city he found an ambassador of John VI., Duke of Brittany, who invited him into his dominions. The Saint promised to respond to the wishes of the prince; but was desirous first to repair to Constance, and to preach in the neighbouring provinces on the German frontier. He traversed the eastern portion of Auvergne and Bourbonnais, and then entered the Duchy of Bourgogne.

At Dijon, St. Vincent received a solemn embassy of the Council of Constance with a cardinal at its head.

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Certain difficulties of grave importance were proposed to him, which the man of God explained with such wonderful lucidity that the ambassadors marvelled at the clearness and solidity of his judgment. When the Fathers of the Council were apprised of the Saint's answer, they shared the admiration of their envoys, and accepted it as an oracle. History does not inform us of the nature of the questions at issue, nor of the solution given thereto. But when the ambassadors withdrew, instead of pursuing his journey to Constance, Vincent directed his steps towards Brittany, either because he had been dispensed from attending the Council, or because he no longer considered his presence necessary after the answer he had given to the questions which had been submitted to him.

Leaving Dijon, he passed through Champagne. At the celebrated Monastery of Clairvaux he dispersed the pestilential fevers with which the community were afflicted. Langres and many other cities of that province enjoyed the privilege of seeing and hearing him. He pushed on his course as far as Nancy, the capital of Lorraine, where he again received an embassy of the Duke of Brittany, who implored him to hasten into his dominions. The Saint, considering himself bound to yield to such pressing solicitations, quitted Lorraine, and travelled towards Brittany by way of Berry. The Archbishop of Bourges had conceived certain unfavourable impressions of him, which disappeared as soon as he had seen and heard him; and from that moment he manifested the greatest goodwill

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towards him. Crossing Berry into Lorraine, St. Vincent converted its capital, which was a Babylon of iniquity, into a Jerusalem of peace and virtue. There a third messenger from the Duke of Brittany rejoined him. He then hastened his journey to that country through Anjou. Preaching at Angers against the excessive extravagance of the women, he effectually put a stop to the scandal.

It was in the beginning of March, 1417, that St. Vincent entered Brittany, where, two years later, he was to terminate his career.[1]

CHAPTER X.

THE SAINT'S LAST APOSTOLIC JOURNEYS IN BRITTANY — TO THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE — IN NORMANDY — AND AGAIN IN BRITTANY.

THE first city in Brittany which St. Vincent evangelised was Nantes. He preached there twelve days following, morning and night, and wrought so many conversions and miracles that the inhabitants declared they had never before witnessed anything like it. This city was steeped in every species of crime, but at the close of the mission was completely changed; religion was deeply planted therein, and practised, and the morals of its people became holy and pure.

From Nantes, the Saint proceeded to Vannes, where the Duke and Duchess of Brittany resided. They gave

[1] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. iii. *per totum.*

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him a reception which equalled, if it did not surpass, that which was accorded him at Toulouse. Many wealthy lords invited him to lodge in their palaces; but he refused those sumptuous abodes, and chose as his residence a humble cottage belonging to a person named Robin Scarb. His entry into Vannes took place on the 20th March, the Saturday before the Fourth Sunday in Lent. The text of the opening discourse, which he preached on the following morning, was taken from the gospel of the day: "*Colligite quæ superaverunt fragmenta*" (Joan. vi.); "Gather up the fragments that remain." These words, as would appear, bore a prophetic meaning; they invited the Bretons to profit by the last days of his preaching on earth, the last fragments of God's Word, which he had so long distributed to the multitude. The inhabitants of Vannes fully understood the Saint's appeal; all sinners were converted. While the mission lasted the law-courts were vacated and the shops closed; the only occupation of all was to make their confessions, to do penance, to repair the injustice done to their neighbours, and to be reconciled to their enemies. So desirous were they to hear the Saint, that neither the inclemency of the season, nor the piercing cold, nor the rain, or the snow which fell at that period, could deter the thousands of his auditors from pressing round the pulpit. We must not forget that St. Vincent always preached in the open air.

Among the graces which the Saint's prayers brought to the ducal family of Brittany may be singled out the blessing of fecundity, for we may justly attribute to the

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merit of his prayers the birth of Duke Peter, who in after-times took an active part in the work and expenses of the Saint's canonisation.

The Count de Rohan, having heard the renown of the new Apostle, conceived a lively desire to have him in his dominions. To satisfy his piety, St. Vincent went to Josselin, a small town in the diocese of St. Malo. He preached there with the usual happy results for the space of eight days; he then proceeded to Rennes, and thence to Dinan and Lamballe.

In the latter town our Saint received pressing letters from the illustrious Chancellor Gerson, one of the lights of the Council of Constance. That great man once more invited Vincent to repair to the august assembly of the Universal Church, to aid it by his counsel, and to edify it by his example. The learned Peter d'Ailly, Cardinal Archbishop of Cambray, having added a post-script to Gerson's letter, Vincent judged it fitting to yield to their request; he had, moreover, a particular interest in explaining and justifying his conduct before the Church. Whether through ignorance or from malice, there were many who confounded the sect of *Flagellants*, who arose at that epoch, with the *Disciplinants* of St. Vincent Ferrer. Gerson gave him prudent and charitable advice regarding this. It behoved him, he said, to contradict these false and injurious reports. St. Vincent then hastened on his way to Germany, and reached Constance some days before the last session of the Council. His presence smoothed down the difficulties that yet remained. On the 11th November,

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1417, measures were able to be taken to proceed to the election of a Sovereign Pontiff, which ended in the nomination of Martin V. After this great achievement, St. Vincent delivered a discourse in Latin, to thank God for the re-establishment of union and peace in the Church.

Towards the close of the same year, or at the commencement of the following, the holy Apostle thinking that the election of the Sovereign Pontiff rendered his sojourn at Constance no longer necessary, and desiring to continue his preaching among the people whom he had begun to evangelise, left Germany, and hastened his return into Brittany. He spent the whole of the month of April, 1418, in traversing the province of Anjou, and gathering on every side most abundant fruits. Wishing afterwards to fulfil a promise he had made to the King of England, he proceeded into Normandy. He preached at St. Lô, at Caen, where the king was staying, and in many other towns in the province, instructing the people throughout, and reforming their morals.

In the meantime the Duchess of Brittany informed the Saint that she was about to give birth to another child, and requested him to come to baptise it immediately after its birth. St. Vincent obeyed the summons, preaching on his journey in the Dioceses of Rennes, St. Malo, St. Brieuc, Quimper, and Nantes. Arriving in the latter city towards the end of the month of November, he preached the Advent, and thence directed his steps to Vannes, at the close of the year 1419.

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He rested on the way at the Cistercian Abbey of Notre Dâme des Prières. Here he was seized with a grievous malady, the first symptom of his approaching end. As soon as he could support the fatigues of travelling, without, however, being completely restored, he resumed his journey to Vannes, where he arrived at the end of February. He was received with indescribable enthusiasm. The Duchess would gladly have lodged him in her own palace, but the Saint once more repaired to the cottage of Robin Scarb.

Unmindful of his sufferings and fatigue, he commenced immediately to preach; but his bodily weakness soon betrayed itself, and he was compelled to succumb. He then exercised the sacred ministry in another way—he instructed the children in Christian doctrine, which, in the latter days of his life, was his most cherished occupation.

This brilliant star of the Church set at Vannes. Before, however, recounting the circumstance of his death, the glory with which God accompanied it, and the devotion which has been paid to him even to our own times, we may be permitted to give a feeble outline of some of the virtues of this great Saint, and of the extraordinary gifts with which God favoured him.

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SECTION THE FOURTH.

The Virtues of St. Vincent Ferrer.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VIRTUES OF ST. VINCENT FERRER IN THEIR RELATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD — THE SAINT'S CHARITY TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOUR — HIS HEROIC DEVOTEDNESS TO THE TEMPORAL NECESSITIES OF HIS BRETHREN.

THE heart of our Saint was for ever attached to God by the sweet bonds of faith, hope, and love. We shall comprehend the liveliness of his faith by the vast number of miracles which he wrought from the commencement of his life to the day of his death. It is to faith that the Gospel attributes the accomplishment of marvels. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed," said our Lord, "you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence thither, and it shall remove" (Matt. xvii. 19). The faith of St. Vincent was doubtless very great, since every day of his life, so to speak, was marked by the miracles which flowed therefrom.

We have already stated with what care he learned from his childhood the truths of religion. He inculcated them to others with equal solicitude. One of the occu-

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pations of his ministry, to which he attached special importance, was to teach the ignorant and children the words and meaning of the Apostles' Creed. He recommended all to recite, morning and evening, this profession of faith as a defensive weapon against error. He, moreover, earnestly exhorted Christians to conform their practice to their belief. "The diamond," said he, "is easily lost in the dunghill, and the precious pearl of faith is in great danger of being lost in a conscience defiled with the filth of sin."

The Saint's hope was even more lively. He made daily use of the means of salvation instituted by Divine Providence. He made his confession every day, and received the Sacrament of the Eucharist; he faithfully accomplished the duties of his calling, and resisted not the inspirations of grace. Few saints have been favoured in the same degree; we allude especially to the assurance, which was on many occasions divinely revealed to him, on the subject of his eternal salvation, and of his predestination to great glory. The "Spiritual Instruction," for the eighth day of the novena in honour of the Saint, contains a touching proof of his confidence in God.

But this sentiment was not confined to himself alone. He felt it even in regard to others, as we read in the Fifth Instruction after the Saint's Feast. We will cite here another example:—A sick person at the hour of death fell into despair at the sight of the crimes with which he felt his conscience burdened. He refused to purify his soul by sacramental confession, replying

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to the priests who exhorted him to this act, that his iniquities were too great — the language of the unhappy Cain. The Saint, who was then in the neighbourhood, being apprised of the dying man's condition, and of the evil dispositions which animated him, hastened to him, and spoke tenderly to him. But the latter answered him as he had done the others, with words of despair. St. Vincent replied: "You well know, however, my dear brother, that the good Jesus died for you on the cross; why then despair of His mercy?" These words, instead of softening the miserable man, only incited his fury, and in a paroxysm of impiety he exclaimed: "It is precisely on that account that I wish to be damned, to displease Jesus Christ." The depth of this despair excited further the hope of St. Vincent, who, full of confidence in the mercy and omnipotence of God, turned his face towards the dying man and said: "I will save thee in spite of thyself." He immediately invited those present to invoke with fervour the Holy Virgin, mother of all goodness, and to recite the Rosary. God was pleased to show, by a miraculous manifestation, how pleasing to Him was the heroic hope of His servant. Before the Rosary was at an end, the sick man's chamber was flooded with an immense light, and the Mother of God appeared; she bore in her arms the Divine Child, Who was covered with bleeding wounds. The despairing sinner, witness of this spectacle, was totally changed. Full of compunction, he asked pardon of God and man for the blasphemies which he had uttered, and,

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having received the Sacraments of the Church, shortly afterwards expired, with his soul prepared to ascend to heaven.[1]

Another sign of his unbounded hope in God's providence was the little solicitude which he evinced in the course of his great apostolate, either for his own personal maintenance, or that of the numerous company which followed him. His confidence in his heavenly Father never failed him. Neither he nor his companions were ever in want, and on one occasion our Lord came miraculously to their aid, as may be seen in the Instruction for the second Friday after the festival of the Saint.

Who shall say how ardent was the love which consumed the heart of St. Vincent Ferrer for his God, his Creator, his Redeemer? He thought always of Him; he preserved a constant remembrance of His benefits; he glorified Him for ever in the depths of his soul. His conversation, like that of his blessed Father St. Dominic, was all in God. This love of his frequently drew sighs from his heart and tears from his eyes.

What did he not do to procure God's glory, and the extension of His kingdom in souls? It was to consecrate himself entirely to this that he renounced the delights of solitude, travelled Europe through and through, crossed mountains and plains, suffered hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and endured untold fatigue. How generously he despised the riches and honours of

[1] "Si legge presso il P. Ravacini, autore molto veridico ed accurato." Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 2.

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the world! He was sensitive only to what was offensive to God. Seeing the iniquities which covered the world in his day, he fell so grievously ill at Avignon and Perpignan, that he was in imminent danger of death. A heavenly hand restored him to health, which he entirely devoted to glorifying God and saving souls.

This idea of God's glory completely absorbed him; and reasonably supposing that the esteem of which he was the object among men, and the honour which was paid to him, referred to the Divine praise, and not to himself, he yielded to them, not through feelings of vanity, but out of pure love to God. He willingly allowed his hands to be kissed, and pieces of his habit to be divided among the people as relics. He knew by experience that such was indeed the Will of God, and it was notified in a remarkable manner to the whole of his native city. Going on one occasion to Valencia, and before entering the city, he sent some of his disciples to prepare the customary reception with the most pompous solemnity. But the Duke of Cordova, who that year resided at Valencia in quality of Viceroy, attributing this triumphant display to pride, declined to sanction it. Yet scarcely had he expressed his refusal when all the bells in the city commenced to ring without any visible impulsion. The inhabitants understood the meaning of the prodigy, and of their own accord went forth to meet their illustrious townsman, with all the pomp and magnificence which they could command. The bells continued to sound forth their

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merry chimes until the Saint arrived at the convent of his Order.[1]

Shall we speak also of the tender devotion of St. Vincent towards the Blessed Virgin and the saints? Preaching, as he was wont, at least twice a day, he did not allow a single day to pass without saying something about the saint whose feast it was. He dwelt on their glory and virtues, and inflamed all hearts with the desire to honour and imitate them. A young man of Barcelona having heard him on the Feast of St. Margaret extol the triumphs of that young martyr over the devil, burned with the desire to rush into combat with the enemy of salvation. Meeting in the way a poor old man who was deaf, and who uttered some inarticulate words, he took him for Satan, and falling furiously upon him, severely maltreated him. St. Vincent stayed the death of the poor man until he could receive the Sacraments with becoming dispositions; while he also rebuked the imprudence of the youth. This act, nevertheless, shows us the ardour which animated him for the glory of the saints.

If faith and zeal for God's glory, and the desire to render his ministry efficacious, induced St. Vincent Ferrer to work wonders, it behoves us to add that another motive also led him to beseech God to accomplish them; this was the tender compassion which he felt for the pains, sorrows, and sufferings of men. Hence those sudden deliverances from inevitable danger, those cures of every species of malady, those resuscita-

[1] Miguel and Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 15.

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tions even from death, which he effected while living. When six years old he was taken to a child of his own age, who was afflicted with a dangerous pustule in the neck. He was told to touch the affected part. Vincent was not content with touching the wound, he kissed it. From the moment that his lips came in contact with the purulent flesh, the malady was instantaneously cured, and the wound closed.[1]

We read in the Instruction for the first Friday before the Saint's Feast how readily he cured a poor man at Montolieu who importuned him. He often forestalled the wishes of sufferers. Preaching one day at Lerida, in presence of the King of Aragon and an immense multitude assembled in one of the public squares, he stopped in the midst of his discourse, and exclaimed that he saw at the distance of half a league a poor paralytic, striving with the utmost difficulty to reach the city. He besought the king to despatch some of his servants to his aid, and to bring him before him. Two persons went off immediately, who found the afflicted man making ineffectual efforts to proceed. They took him in their arms, and brought him to the Saint. As they were approaching the platform on which he stood, raising his hand, he made the sign of the Cross over the paralytic. At the same instant the sufferer was completely cured, and ran to the Saint to thank him. To express still more his gratitude, he attached himself to the Saint for a long space of time.[2]

[1] P. Pontieri, P. Ferrarini. Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 16.
[2] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. iii. c. 21.

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On another occasion, a woman came in deep desolation to see him. She had been unfaithful to her marriage vows during the prolonged absence of her husband, and was on the point of disclosing her shame by an adulterous childbirth. To complete her misery, she received a letter from her husband announcing his speedy arrival. She then went to seek aid and counsel of the man of God. St. Vincent first exhorted her to repentance, then encouraged her to have confidence in God, and promised her that her husband's arrival should be delayed until there was no longer any danger. The event proved the truth of his words, and the efficacy of his prayers. The husband put off his return for an indefinite time. The woman was wholly astonished at the delay, and, in the interval, was relieved of her embarrassment, without compromising either her conscience or her reputation. When the husband at length arrived, the woman said to him: "You told me in your letter that you would speedily return; why, then, have you tarried so long?" The man replied: "I was returning not far from hence, when my mules, laden with goods, ran away. I was obliged to go after them, and have spent many days in consequence. At length I found them, and, thank God, none of the goods which they carried have been lost. The only injury that I have sustained is the loss of the few days during which I went in pursuit of them." The woman fully comprehended the providential reason of the accident; she was filled with thankfulness to God and His servant; and repaired also the injury

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she had done, by leading thenceforth an irreproachable life.[1]

Thus did St. Vincent save a woman who was deserving of infamy and death, and possibly even of eternal damnation.

On another occasion he came to the aid of a woman who was unjustly accused by her husband. She gave birth to a child, and this man pretended, though he knew better, that the child was not his own. His intention was to separate himself from her, and he was desirous of having some apparent reason for so doing. Conscious only of her innocence, the unhappy mother, a prey to mortal anguish, went to confide her troubles to St. Vincent, who, she was informed, never refused consolation to the afflicted. The Saint, indeed, gave her great comfort; then said to her: "Come to my next sermon, bid your husband mix with the audience, and omit not to bring your baby with you." The woman faithfully obeyed the instructions given her. When St. Vincent had opened his discourse, he, in presence of a vast multitude, addressed himself to a little child only a few days old: "Leave thy mother's arms," said he, "and go in search of thy father in the midst of this great crowd of people." Wonderful to relate! the little child received in a miraculous manner the use of its feet, and threaded its way through the concourse of people unassisted, and, seizing the hand of its mother's husband, it cried out: "This is my father, I am really his child." The people were deeply affected at the

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 5.

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sight of this prodigy. The unnatural father, thus publicly convicted of his fault, sobbed aloud, asked pardon of his wife for having calumniated her, and made full reparation for his fault by the assiduous practice of every domestic virtue.

We will cite, moreover, the following example of our Saint's ardent charity. A woman near the term of pregnancy, who was in dread of suffering, sent for him, and implored him to deliver her from the agonies which threatened her at the moment of childbirth. St. Vincent exhorted her to patience, and observed that the sufferings of that hour were the effect of God's Will, and of a law which had been in force since the beginning of the world. "Doubtless so," replied she, redoubling her importunities; "but He Who made that law can, by a miracle, exempt me from it, and I hope He will do so by the merits of your blessing." Seeing her confidence, St. Vincent said to her, "Have courage, my good woman, I will take the burden on myself, and you shall not sustain any harm at that critical moment." He then blessed her and departed. The hour arrived, and St. Vincent felt within himself physical suffering equivalent to that of a woman in travail. As to the person who had sought his help, she experienced neither accident nor pain of any kind. Such is the charity of the saints. They are not content with sharing the sufferings of their brethren, but joyfully take the whole on themselves. Thus the Seraphic Virgin of Siena takes entirely on herself the pains of purgatory which her father ought to suffer; thus also does St. Michael-des-

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Saints, of the Order of the Trinity, with God's permission, undertake a malignant fever from which a friend of his is suffering. The Great Model of Saints gave the first example of this. "Surely He hath borne infirmities," saith the prophet, "and carried our our sorrows" (Isaias liii. 4).[1]

St. Vincent left behind him lasting memorials of his admirable charity. The number of hospitals, asylums, refuges, churches, and even bridges, which he founded during his apostolic journeyings, is almost incredible. Having at his disposal a considerable staff in the bands of people who accompanied him, he availed himself of their services to build hastily those edifices consecrated to charity. He left some of these in almost every country through which he passed. One of his most remarkable foundations was the orphanage at Valencia, his birthplace, an establishment which has borne his name even to this day.

St. Vincent de Paul gloried in St. Vincent Ferrer as his patron; and we can well conceive that the examples of charity in the model would not be without their influence on the holy priest who essayed to walk in his footsteps.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 5.

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CHAPTER XII.

INCOMPARABLE ZEAL OF ST. VINCENT FERRER FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS—OTHER VIRTUES OF THE SAINT.

THE principal object of the Order of Friar Preachers is to labour for the salvation of souls. Thus did the Saint comprehend it, and to this end did he apply himself with such ardour. His constant study was to find out every means possible to withdraw souls from sin, to reconcile them to God, and to conduct them in the paths of perfect sanctity.

While at Avignon he was informed of an ecclesiastical dignitary whose life was not conformable to the holiness of his state. He spent the whole night in prayer to God for his conversion. At daybreak, being moved by a Divine inspiration, he repaired to the prelate's palace with a crucifix in his hand, and entering he pushed his way into the chamber where he reposed. He immediately opened one of the windows, and returning to the prelate, who was in bed, addressed him thus: "My son," said he, "behold the Divine Jesus, and consider how good and full of love He is! You fly from Him, but He comes with confidence to the very foot of your bed to find you. Make then your peace, my son, make your peace with Jesus. What does it avail you to have so often offended Him? It is enough, it is enough; embrace your sweet Master and love Him." Saying this, he placed the crucifix to the lips of the ecclesiastic, and hastily left him. The prelate, stupefied

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and ashamed, entered into himself, and pressing the image of our Lord to his breast, he got up; then falling prostrate on the floor, he wept bitterly over his past disorders, implored pardon of God, and made a firm resolution of amendment. Dressing himself in great haste, he hurried off to the Saint, who was waiting for him, and who was assured, by light from on high, of his conversion. He made his confession, and thenceforth practised the holiness and regularity of life befitting his calling.[1]

The Saint was on another occasion preaching at Pampeluna, when he was suddenly enraptured in the midst of his discourse. Returning to himself, he informed his audience that God commanded him to interrupt his preaching in order to put a stop to a grievous offence that was being committed in the city. He immediately descended from the pulpit, and, followed by a group of persons surprised and curious to see what would happen, bent his steps towards a sumptuous palace. The doors were closed. He touched one of them with his hand, and it immediately opened of itself. When he entered he declaimed with great energy against the impure vice while traversing the halls and chambers. They who followed him saw no one, but they distinctly heard the voices of the wretched people who were the victims of their sinful passion. St. Vincent implored them to desist, but they persisted in their sin. He threatened them with terrible chastisements; but they derided him all the more. Then God avenged Himself

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 4.

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on their crime — they were changed into statues of marble. The Saint entered the chamber, and disclosed to the bystanders the terrible way in which divine vengeance had chastised the crimes and obstinacy of those unhappy people. Nevertheless, being touched with compassion, he approached the statues, and breathing into their mouths, restored them to life. This act of charity also changed their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. They acknowledged their guilt, and made their confession one after the other. Hardly had they received sacramental absolution, than the vehemence of their contrition brought death a second time, for they expired at the feet of the Saint. God blessed the zeal of His servant by this wonderful conversion to show how agreeable to Him was his charity, which never shrank from any means calculated to save the souls of his neighbours.[1]

So great was St. Vincent's love for souls that he unhesitatingly accepted the most heroic sacrifices to insure their salvation. When preaching in Spain, he was one day called to a dying person older in sin than in years. The latter was unwilling to be spoken to on the subject of confession, and was resolved to crown the wickedness of his life with final despair. Vincent arrived, but all his advances were met by a steady refusal on the part of the sick man. Then the Saint said to him, "I assure you that God has pardoned you. I have prayed for you, and have obtained mercy; nay, more, whatever merits I may have, these I have entirely

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 4.

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made over to you." At these words, which marked such singular generosity, the troubled soul of the dying man was somewhat reassured, and he replied, "I will make my confession, but you must beforehand put in writing both the petition for pardon and the promised donation." "With all my heart," said the Saint; and he immediately wrote with his own hand on a sheet of paper a prayer to the God of mercy in behalf of that poor repentant sinner, and at the same time supplicated the Divine Bounty to transfer to him all the merits which he himself might have acquired throughout the course of his life. He confessed the dying man, then placed in his hands the written document. The latter soon after entered into a sweet agony, and peacefully expired. Scarcely had he drawn his last breath than the document disappeared. It followed the soul to the tribunal of the Supreme Judge. The Divine Majesty was pleased to give it a public and authentic testimony, in order that the fact coming to the knowledge of sinners, might inspire them also with obedience to the word of His ambassador. While Vincent was preaching in a public square to more than thirty thousand persons, they beheld the sheet of paper which he had given to the dying person descend from heaven, and it fell into his hands. This was an object of general astonishment, for no one was cognisant of the mystery. But their surprise knew no bounds when Vincent, having read the document, told the people that it was the petition written with his own hand, given to the sick man who had scandalised the city by his sinful conduct, and who

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had resolved to die impenitent; that that man had heard him, that he himself had confessed him; that when dying he had taken that piece of paper and presented it at the tribunal of God; that the Sovereign Judge had accepted it, that he had signed its authenticity, and that, finally, he had a perfect certainty of that soul's salvation.[1] We can easily judge of the impression which this surprising miracle would produce on the minds of the multitude. As for ourselves, what excites our admiration even more is the charity of the Saint, who so completely forgot himself that he could only think of others, and who joyfully relinquished all the spiritual treasures of his life that he might insure the eternal felicity of his neighbour. How could sinners after this resist such sincere proofs of love and devotedness? We need not therefore be surprised at the extraordinary success of St. Vincent Ferrer. If faith removes mountains, we must not forget that love is strong as death, and that nothing can resist it (Cant. viii.).

The Saint, formed in the School of the Blessed Dominic, possessed in the highest degree every moral virtue: justice, obedience, temperance, chastity, poverty, mortification, humility, sweetness, affability, generosity, magnanimity, courage, constancy. Many examples of these are to be found in the "Spiritual Instruction," both for the Fridays before and after his Feast, as well as in the novena. For the edification of the reader, we will give an outline of those virtues which are not to be met with

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 4. Ferrarini: "Lo attesta la tradizione comune che ne corre per la Spagna presso de savii."

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in the pages referred to, since he would doubtless not be willing that we should omit them in this chapter.

First of all, let us not pass over in silence the following example, which shows the perfection of his chastity. He was already a religious, when certain envious persons, annoyed at the encomiums that were passed on his virtue, and urged by diabolical inspiration, bribed with a large sum of money a profligate woman to secrete herself in the Saint's cell. They helped her to accomplish her purpose one winter evening while he prolonged his prayer in the Church. When Vincent opened the door and found the miserable creature seated at the foot of his bed, he thought at first it was an artifice of the devil, who wished to tempt him under that seducing form. He made the sign of the cross, and exclaimed: "What doest thou here, Satan, enemy of God?" "I am not Satan," answered the profligate, "but a young woman who can no longer resist the love she bears towards you." She was about to continue, but the Saint interrupted her in a brief and imperious tone: "Go hence, wretch," cried he, "and be careful lest a sudden death overtake thee by reason of thy frightful iniquity! How darest thou attempt to sully my body and soul, which from my childhood I have consecrated to Jesus Christ?" Whether from fright, or from excessive impudence, the unhappy woman remained immovable. Then Vincent cast some burning cinders from a brazier on the floor, and kneeling upon them, he said: "Come, if thou darest, come and cast thyself on this fire; it is not so terrible as that of hell." At this spectacle the woman became half-dead, weeping,

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sobbing, imploring pardon of the Saint, and promising him that she would entirely change her life. She disclosed to him the names of those who had led her to this act. Vincent dismissed her, commanding her to conceal the names of her accomplices. But she did not promise silence. On the following morning she related all, and covered with shame those who sought to calumniate and dishonour the Saint. The sinner became sincerely converted.[1]

Despite his gushing and ardent character, Vincent Ferrer exhibited a patience that was proof against every trial. From his childhood he strove to repress anger. One day, a servant in his father's house blasphemed the Name of our Lord. Vincent, following the first impulse of his indignation, severely reprimanded him. The latter did not profit by it; he replied with injurious epithets, and even struck the child. The young Saint, instead of crying and complaining, changed his zeal to meekness, and said to the man: "Dear brother, I owe you much; in chastening me you have taught me the prudence which it is proper to observe in correcting persons older than oneself, and especially servants who are in anger. I shall know it another time." The man, whose name was Alexis Raffet, was so astonished at this patience, this heroic sweetness and humility, that he cast himself at the child's feet to ask his pardon, and implored him not to mention to his father or mother what had happened. Vincent threw himself into his arms, and, with a radiant countenance, said to him, "Do not fear, they shall know

[1] Ranzano, Teoli, &c.

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nothing of what has passed. Only, my dear friend, do not blaspheme in future." [1]

When afflicted with great suffering towards the end of his life, he underwent a surgical operation without uttering the slightest groan. He only invoked tenderly the sweet names of Jesus, Mary, or some saint. He drank without dislike the bitter draughts that were administered to him. He was frequently during the course of his apostolate almost stifled by the people, and once he remained as dead under the feet of the multitude. He made no complaint, and on rising exhibited a placid countenance, as though he had suffered nothing. When his infirmities obliged him to the use of an ass, he from time to time sustained severe falls, yet on these occasions he never exhibited the least sign of impatience. But, as his disciples remarked with astonishment, in reward of this virtue, God never permitted him to suffer any inconvenience from these accidents. Not only did Vincent practise this virtue which renders man amiable to those who live with him, but he also inculcated it to others with great tact. One day a woman came to him, complaining bitterly of the bad treatment she had to endure on the part of her husband. "Teach me, my good Father," said she, "an efficacious method of preserving peace at home, in order that my husband may cease to ill-use me both by word and deed." The Saint allowed her uninterrupted speech, well knowing the cause of the evil for which she sought a remedy; it was only her loquacity, and petulance; she irritated her husband

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 16.

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by her chattering and provoking answers. Then the Saint quietly said to her: "If you wish to put an end to these disagreeable scenes, go to the Brother Porter of our Convent, and bid him give you a jug of water from the well which is in the middle of the cloister. When your husband returns home, take at once a mouthful of this water without swallowing it, and retain it for a considerable time in your mouth. If you do this, I assure you that your husband will no more be angry with you, and will become as meek as a lamb." The woman immediately hastened to execute the Saint's advice, seeing that the remedy was by no means a difficult one. When the husband returned home, and began to show symptoms of irritation, she ran to the jug and filled her mouth with water, which she retained as long as she was able; the result being that, meeting with no reply, the husband himself was silent. He wondered at this, but said nothing, and thanked God for having changed the heart and closed he mouth whence proceeded all their disputes. Having put this advice in practice many times, and always with the same success, the woman returned to St. Vincent overflowing with thanks to him for having taught her so excellent a remedy. Then the Saint, speaking to her with sweetness, plainly told her: "The remedy which I have taught you, my daughter, is not the water from the well, as you suppose, but silence. By holding your tongue, you have preserved peace between yourself and your husband. He had scarcely entered the house, when you irritated him by your troublesome questions; it was your own fault if this anger increased; your pro-

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voking rejoinders were the cause of it. Be silent in future, and you will always live in peace with your husband." Hence the common proverb in Valencia; when a woman complained of her husband, she was answered: "Fill your mouth with water, and what St. Vincent said will come to pass." [1]

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 13.

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SECTION THE FIFTH.

THE MARVELLOUS GIFTS WHICH SHONE FORTH IN ST. VINCENT FERRER.

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. VINCENT FERRER FAVOURED WITH A MULTITUDE OF VISIONS, REVELATIONS, AND ECSTACIES — THE SECRETS OF HEARTS REVEALED TO THE SAINT.

INCENT FERRER daily beheld in his private prayers, and even in the course of his apostolic preaching, either pious souls who still lived on earth, or the souls in purgatory, or the saints in Paradise, the angels, the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, and our Lord Himself.

He was one day praying for the conversion of souls, when he beheld a fervent nun of the Order of St. Francis doing as he did; her eyes were bathed in tears, and she was prostrate at the feet of our Lord. He heard Christ say to her: "Thy tears, My daughter, are most agreeable, and I joyfully hear thy prayers; but these ungrateful and guilty people, who outrage the law, and blaspheme My Name, have little claim on My pity; on the contrary, they provoke My justice." At the same time our Lord revealed to the Saint that this nun was Colette, the

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illustrious saint who laboured with much fruit for the reformation of the Sisters of her Order. Vincent was filled with admiration and delight at this spectacle.

On another day, while he celebrated Mass at Valencia, on his return from one of his apostolic journeys, he saw appear before him, and as it were over the altar, a woman surrounded with flames, and holding in her arms a little disfigured child. Astonished at such a vision, he adjured the woman, in the Name of the Lord, to tell him who she was, and what she wanted. She was one of his own sisters, named Frances, who had been dead some time. She had married a rich merchant. The latter having been obliged to undertake a long journey, the chief servant of his house profited by his absence to constrain his wife to commit sin with him, under the threat of death unless she consented. She was weak enough to yield; but, recovering from her fright, and being covered with shame in her own eyes, she poisoned the man to rid herself of his foul presence; and as she had conceived, she destroyed the offspring before it was born. To complete her misery, she dared not avow these crimes in confession, and added to these murders numerous sacrileges. At length remorse filled her soul. She made her confession to an unknown priest, with the greatest sorrow for her crimes, and died three days afterwards. God having condemned her to an expiation of terrible duration, she addressed herself to her brother to abridge its length. She indeed appeared again to St. Vincent three days afterwards in glory, crowned with flowers, surrounded by angels, and ascending to heaven;

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thus did she disappear from his sight.[1] The rest of his family gave him the purest consolations. He beheld the souls of his father, mother, brother, and other sisters, ascend to heaven without passing through the flames of purgatory.

While he was one night sleeping in the Convent at Cervera, in Spain, St. Dominic appeared, and the rays of light which surrounded him were so bright that they woke Vincent. "My son," said the glorious Father, "the Lord has commanded me to visit you to impart to you most useful instructions which will redouble your ardour, and enable you to pursue the course of your apostolic preaching with much fruit. Yes, my son," added the Founder of the Order, "persevere till death in the path on which you have entered. Your works are most pleasing to God. The fidelity with which you discharge the duties of your profession shall merit for you in heaven the same degree of glory which I myself enjoy. You resemble me perfectly in the observance of the rule, and in your personal holiness, virginal purity, and zeal for the salvation of souls; like me, you have been sent by Christ to preach and to teach the gospel truth; only I am the root and trunk of the Order, you are one of the most fruitful branches and fairest flowers engrafted thereon. Persevere then in your way, so that, having arrived at the term of your pilgrimage, you may reign eternally with me among the happy citizens of heaven." Vincent humbled himself profoundly, thanked the blessed Father for his precious visit, and fervently commended

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 11.

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himself to his intercession. While this interview lasted, the two Saints spoke so loud that several of Vincent's companions, who slept in an adjoining room, were awakened. Peter de Moya, peeping through the chinks of the door, saw in Vincent's cell a venerable religious, whose countenance was so radiant with light that the whole place was illumined. On the following morning, his disciples, conjecturing that their spiritual master had received some extraordinary heavenly favour, asked him what religious had appeared to him on the previous night. Vincent was desirous of concealing from them the favour he had received; but they importuned him so much that he related to them what had occurred, requesting them to preserve a rigorous silence on the subject of the vision till his death.[1]

One of the most interesting angelical manifestations occurring to our Saint was that of the angel guardian of Barcelona. On entering the city he saw, near the gate, a young man resplendent with light, holding a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. The Saint asked him what he was doing with arms in that place. "I am the angel guardian of Barcelona," said he; "this city is under my protection." In the first sermon which followed this remarkable vision, Vincent related what had happened to him, congratulated the inhabitants of Barcelona on their happiness, and exhorted them to offer their thanksgiving to the angel who guarded them; this they did by building a small chapel on the very spot where the angel appeared to the holy preacher.

[1] Ranzano, and all the Saint's biographers.

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Very frequently also, when Vincent was in the pulpit, the people saw the angels forming a crown around his head.[1]

One cannot doubt that the visions of the Blessed Mother of God to her faithful servant Vincent were also very frequent. A sacred image of Mary was for a long time preserved in the convent at Valencia, which, it is said, spoke to him; and St. Louis Bertrand being one day asked if this were true, he gave this remarkable answer: "It spoke not merely twice or three times, but continually, for Mary dealt with Vincent as the tenderest of mothers."[2]

It is clear also that our Lord Jesus Christ frequently appeared to him, as at Avignon and Perpignan, when He Himself miraculously cured him. But Vincent's humility concealed those graces so effectually, that they seldom came to the knowledge of men. It was by pious stratagem only that he was seen raised in the air in his cell, and surrounded in the night with an immense light. While staying in a Benedictine priory at Josselin in Brittany, the monks frequently went in the night to watch him in his cell through the chinks in the door; they beheld him sleeping on the floor, with his Bible for a pillow, and his face beaming with a splendour which illumined the cell. Amazed at this spectacle, the good monks permitted the Count de Rohan to witness it, on whose mind it made such a deep impression that he from that moment became an example of sincere piety.[3]

[1] Ranzano, and all the Saint's biographers.
[2] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 12. [3] The chief biographers of the Saint.

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The Saint received these choice graces with deep humility and a wise caution. He counselled his disciples not to curiously desire them, and to wisely resist them, seeing that the spirit of darkness, transforming himself into an angel of light, may easily substitute himself for God in these circumstances, when they were not animated with the requisite dispositions.

The discernment of spirits was marvellous in the Saint.

There was at Barcelona a person named Louis Cataldo, who suffered severe pains in the head. This man had no faith in the daily miracles of Vincent; but experiencing no relief from any remedy, he went one day in desperation to the church of the Friar Preachers; and at the moment when Vincent descended from the pulpit, he said to him: "Father, I have suffered frightful pains in the head for two years; I implore you to cure me." The Saint replied: "I am neither God, nor a doctor, to cure you." At this answer, the sufferer understood that the Saint knew the secret thoughts of his incredulous heart. But aided by God's grace, and putting aside all hesitation, he said to him once more: "And yet I firmly hope you will grant me this favour." "But do you really believe it?" said the Saint. "Certainly, my Father," answered the other. Then Vincent placed his hand on Louis's head, saying, "Thou art already cured; thank God, and believe that they who serve Him are invested with great power." The cure was so complete, that during the space of forty years which he lived the man never experienced the slightest pain in the head.

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One day a person named Gaja came to the Saint and importuned him to admit him into his company. Vincent was very willing to receive him, but told him to sell beforehand all that he possessed, and distribute the price of it to the poor. This man obtained four hundred gold pieces by his sale. He secretly kept back two hundred of them, gave the rest to the poor, and then went to inform the Saint that he had executed his commands. At these words Vincent, fixing his eyes on him, said: "Man of little faith, thinkest thou that the least thing would be wanting to thee in my company? Thou imaginest, perhaps, that I am ignorant of what thou hast done? Go, thou hast given only half of thy money to the poor. I refuse thee as a member of my company, I want not disciples of this stamp." At this reproof, so unlooked for, the man cast himself at the Saint's feet, implored his forgiveness, and promised to bestow on the poor the sum which he had withheld. This promise satisfied Vincent, who, seeing him resolved to obey, tenderly embraced him, and admitted him into his company.

One of the pilgrims who followed the Apostle of God was interiorly disposed to doubt the miracles and conversions which he saw accomplished by the Thaumaturgus. He watched his words and actions, in order to turn them to ridicule, after the manner of the Pharisees, whose eyes were always fixed on the Saviour of men with a view to find fault. One day Vincent accosted him, and, looking intently at him, began to lay open to him all the thoughts of his heart, all the censures and criticisms

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which weighed upon his soul in regard to his apostolic doings; he did it so truthfully and with such energy, that the disciple, confused and repentant, threw himself on his knees and humbly besought his pardon. Vincent readily accorded it to him, but at the same time gave him a paternal caution. "Pay attention," said he, "to what you do yourself, and not to what others do."

An Aragonian named Don Ferdinand belonged also to the Saint's company. He was not sincere; he affected exteriorly a sanctity which he had not at heart, and was all the more culpable, inasmuch as he removed himself further from the true perfection taught by the holy master, and generally practised by his companions. This hypocrisy was so exquisitely refined, so artfully concealed from the eyes of all, that, humanly speaking, it was impossible to detect it. But celestial light never failed St. Vincent in penetrating a secret. He once took the person aside, and said to him: "Really if I did not know that you would one day undertake great hardships for my honour, I would chase you from my company, for you are wicked." These words covered Don Ferdinand with confusion, and filled him with remorse. "Dear master," answered he, "pray to God for me." The Saint replied: "I have already done so, and it has been vouchsafed that you shall not be condemned. You shall, moreover, prosper exceedingly on the earth, and live for many years. Procure then the book entitled, 'Du Mépris du Monde,'[1] and read it." It

[1] This book, according to common opinion, is the "Imitation of Jesus Christ."

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turned out as St. Vincent predicted. Don Ferdinand, in fact, embraced a most virtuous life; he prospered in his career, and even became chaplain to the king and Bishop of Telesia. In the year 1454 he was at Naples, where he contributed to the canonisation of St. Vincent, by rendering testimony to many miracles which he had seen performed under his own eyes. He left behind him so high an opinion of his virtues, as to verify the latter part of his master's prophecy: "You shall not be condemned."

When he heard the confessions of sinners, Vincent miraculously assisted them in discovering the faults which escaped their recollection. But what is still more remarkable is, that, during his sermons, he would sometimes fix his eyes upon people whom he had never before seen or heard, then he would enter on the subject of the sins which they usually committed, laying open the circumstances so clearly, and with such precision, that the people were accustomed to say: "This man is truly a Saint, for he knows the most hidden secrets of our hearts." Was it a usurer, an adulterer, a thief, an assassin, a person guilty of the foulest crimes, the Saint's words came home to him with such truthful effect, that at the end of the discourse he succeeded, by his close reasoning and an eloquence inflamed with love, in converting them from vice to a life of justice and penance. God exhibited to the prophet Ezekiel the abominations of His people at the time wherein that prophet lived, that he might exhort them to repentance. He bestowed the same lights on Vincent Ferrer. Wher-

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ever he preached, he saw the sins of people and the wounds of souls; it was this that rendered his speech so full of wisdom, so prudent and efficacious in correcting vice.[1]

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. VINCENT FERRER ENDOWED WITH THE GIFT OF PROPHECY—THE GRACE OF MIRACLES ACCORDED, WITHOUT MEASURE, TO THE SAINT.

GOD, of Himself, and through the instrumentality of His saints, revealed to Vincent Ferrer his own predestination, and the glory which would surround his name in the Catholic Church. This was not enough: He moreover willed that the Saint's own lips should announce it to the people. On one occasion, therefore, when preaching at Alexandria in Piedmont, he thus spoke to his auditory: "My brethren, I have good news to tell you: there is a young man among you who will be the glory of the Seraphic Order and of Italy (he signified St. Bernardine of Siena). He will take my place among you when I shall have returned to Spain. His heavenly life and holy teaching will bear most abundant fruits; he will become a great light in the Church, which will honour him before it accords the same honour to myself." The prophecies contained in these words were literally fulfilled. Bernardine of Siena, having entered the Order of St. Francis, preached in Italy, died in 1444,

[1] Teoli, lib. Tratt. ii. c. 5.

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and was canonised in 1450, some years before Vincent was himself canonised.

Preaching one day at Valencia, the Saint openly declared that he should die in the odour of sanctity in a country far away from his native land, and that his body would perform a great number of miracles. The prophetic spirit unfolded itself still further in him ; he even specified many of the particular circumstances of his canonisation, and especially the personage who would render him that honour.

This occurred many times. The first was at the Château de Canals, not far from the town of Xativa. On passing the Château, he met a lady named Francina, the wife of Dominic Borgia. She was a little advanced in pregnancy, but was not certain of it. Vincent assured her of this, and added : " The child which you bear will one day be Pope." Some time afterwards, in the year 1378, say the historians, passing by the same place on his way to preach at Xativa, Vincent saw Francina holding in her arms a child which she had given birth to only a few days before. " Take great care of this little child," said he, " it will be Pope and will canonise me." Some months elapsed, and one day that Vincent was in the company of some of the child's relations, it chanced that his mother arrived with him in her arms. The Saint embraced him ; then turning to the company, he said : " Kiss the feet of this child, a time will come when he will be created Pope, and when he will canonise me." When the child was three years old, one of his uncles again presented him to the holy religious, who

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said: "Make him study well; let him go to school, for he will one day become Pope, and will render great honours to me." In fine, towards the year 1400, when preaching at Lerida, Vincent had among his auditors this young man whose infancy he had blessed, and of whom he had predicted so glorious a future. The student was so much impressed by the preacher, that he went to see him after the sermon, and said to him: "You preach marvellously well, my Father; you will be a Saint!" "And it will be you who will canonise me," replied Vincent. This prophecy, so often repeated, was fully realised. Alphonsus Borgia became a learned theologian, and a distinguished canonist; he was Canon of Lerida and Barcelona, curé of the parish of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Valencia, and at last cardinal. When he had been elevated to so high a dignity, he felt so certain, on the Saint's assurance, of being one day elected Pope, that he made a vow to pursue the Turks from the moment he became Sovereign Pontiff. In 1455 he proclaimed the sanctity of him who had so often announced his own glorious destiny.

To enumerate the Saint's prophecies would be impossible. They had reference to individuals, communities, cities, kingdoms, and the Universal Church.

Peter de Luna, abandoned by every one, still obstinately persisted in his claims. "His ambition will be punished," said Vincent Ferrer; "this man will sink into universal contempt, and his body will become the plaything of children." This latter circumstance was verified at the time of the wars of succession in Spain at

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the commencement of the eighteenth century. The French being in possession of the Isle of Peniscola, some children dug open the tomb of that obstinate man, and took out of it the bones, which served them as play-things for several days.

Vincent gave at the Convent of the Friar Preachers at Valencia some interesting sermons on the saints who would flourish therein. This convent was truly a nursery of saints. We may cite, among others, the Blessed Dominic of Mont-Majeur, Amateur Espy, John Micon, and especially the illustrious St. Louis Bertrand, with a great number of his disciples.

We have spoken of the prophecy which the Saint uttered at Barcelona, when the city was made desolate by a terrible famine. He announced in the city of Teulada, which was often ravaged by the Moors, that it should be henceforth under cover of their incursions, and he added that the plague should never touch them. Both these prophecies were marvellously fulfilled. Vincent loved his country. He foretold with tears the revolutions which would disturb it; when they burst forth, he made every effort to restore peace to the State, and by his prayers, prudence, and firmness, succeeded therein. He, moreover, foretold the decisive expulsion of the Moors from Spain. In less than a century later, Grenada, their last bulwark, fell into the hands of Isabella the Catholic.

But according to the Venerable Seraphin de la Porretta, a most learned and holy religious of our Order, the distinctive characteristic of Vincent Ferrer

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was the preaching and announcing of the last judgment. Yes, Vincent was the Angel of the Apocalypse, as he proved at Salamanca, by raising a woman to life. He proclaimed that awful day as imminent and near. Let us observe, however, that this prophecy was comminatory, as was that of Jonas at Nineve. Had not the world been converted by the preaching of our Saint, it would not have subsisted to the present hour. But it changed as did the Ninevites, and like Nineve was it saved, and its existence thus prolonged. God has delayed the execution of that terrible sentence, according to the expression of St. Ambrose, founded on Holy Scripture: "God will know how to change His resolution, provided you amend your life." Otherwise, considering the rapidity with which time flows by, one might well believe in the proximity of the end of the world, and of the judgment which will follow.

St. Vincent foretold that a society of apostolic men would rise up in the latter times, who would be eminent for their piety, and whose zeal would be extraordinary. We flatter ourselves that this prophecy is being realised in the Order of St. Dominic itself, as has been shown in another work.[1] An author writes: "The life of St. Vincent Ferrer was a standing miracle, whose object was the living, the dead, persons in health, those who were sick, the earth, the air, and the sea; in a word, all the elements."[2] But what appears to us even more

[1] "Manuel du très-Saint Rosaire," 3e p., art. xv., 13e Mardi avant la fête de Saint Dominique. Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9.

[2] The Rev. F. Ramon, Master in Theology.

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remarkable, is the facility with which the holy Thaumaturgus wrought those wonders. It was as easy for him to do this, says the Venerable Louis de Grenada, as it is for us to lift the hand to the mouth. It was an habitual gift of his, a gift which he possessed even before his birth, as we have shown at the beginning of this work; a gift which accompanied his childhood, which increased with his youth, and attained perfection in his manhood, especially when commissioned by our Lord to evangelise the world during the latter twenty years of his life. It was during that period that he regularly performed them every morning after his preaching: "*Ring the bell of miracles,*"[1] he was wont to say to one of his disciples. He was sometimes interiorly inspired not to cure all who presented themselves; but when they returned at the appointed hour, he always finished by restoring them to health. Had he in the course of those years performed but eight miracles a day, they would have reached the extraordinary number of fifty-eight thousand four hundred. But this calculation clearly falls far short of the mark, since it is a well-attested fact that the Saint wrought them not only in public assemblies, and in the pulpit, but even while travelling, while resting on his journeys; at every moment, so to speak. Hence the common saying among his biographers: "It was a miracle when he did not work miracles, and the greatest miracle was when he performed none at all." St. Louis Bertrand confirms their testimony: "God," says

[1] "Tocau a milacre"—the Saint's own words. Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 20.

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this Saint, "sanctioned the teaching of Vincent Ferrer by so many miracles, that there never was a saint since the days of the Apostles to our own time who wrought more. God alone knows their number, as He alone knows the number of the stars that people the firmament."[1] We have already related many of these miracles, and shall record others in the Third Part of our work; still, we may be allowed to instance here some which deserve to be known and remembered.

On the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, a frightful storm burst over the city of Barbastro, in Catalonia, at the moment when the Saint was unvesting after Mass. The rain fell in torrents, and the lightning flashed, and thunder rolled with such terrific effect as to threaten all around with instant destruction. The Saint, leaving the church, made the sign of the Cross with holy-water, when the storm was immediately appeased, and the sky became serene. Ascending the pulpit, he exhorted the people to return thanks to the holy Apostles for the favour they had just received, and said that, unless they had interceded with God, there would have remained neither leaves on the trees, nor green herbs in the country. He added: "Unless you beseech God to preserve your goods, and promise to make a holy use of them, next year another tempest will devastate the entire land." Eleven months later and a terrible storm literally accomplished this prediction.[2]

St. Vincent was one day preaching at Berga, in

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 21.

[2] Ranzano, and other biographers.

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Catalonia, with great fervour and unction, on the most Holy Name of Jesus. A violent rain, which had been expected for many hours, at length fell with great impetuosity. His audience hastily dispersed to find shelter. Some fled to the house of a Moorish smith, and sought refuge in a workshop built of dry wood. A good woman said to the smith: "Why do you not come, as we do, to hear the sermons of the holy Father?" At these words the Mahometan became furious. "Cursed be your holy Father!" cried he; and with the sparks from his forge setting fire to the dried wood that was arranged around the workshop, he added, "We shall now see what use you make of those sermons." The fire rapidly communicated itself to the numerous materials that lay about, and the unfortunate people were speedily surrounded with flames. In their danger they invoked the Holy Name of Jesus. "O sweet Jesus," said they, "your preacher, Master Vincent, told us that your Name is the help of Christians, deliver us from this pressing danger!" In an instant the flames were extinguished, and the wood even ceased to smoke. This miracle astonished the Mahometan; he was converted, and three days later St. Vincent baptised him.[1]

On another occasion, the Saint crossed the Ebro to Tortosa with all his company in boats that were too small to contain, without danger, the number of persons who filled them. The water soon got into the boats, and they were on the point of sinking. Cries of distress were heard on every side. They implored the Saint to

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 16.

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save them. He made the sign of the Cross on the river; in an instant the boats ceased to take in water, and reached the shore in safety.

Often did he miraculously multiply bread and wine and other victuals. We shall give a remarkable instance of this in the Instruction for the second Friday after the Saint's Feast.

Wonderful, indeed, were the ways in which he manifested his gifts. Well-attested documents show that multitudes of people have witnessed him in the middle of his discourse suddenly assume wings, and fly off to console and encourage some suffering person who sought his help; and having performed that act of charity, he would return in the same manner to continue his preaching. It is on this account that, like the angels, St. Vincent is represented with wings.[1]

God accorded the Saint the gift of languages. Into whatever country he entered, although he preached in the Valencian idiom, he was perfectly heard and understood; and in conversation, he spoke in French, Italian, English, and German, according to the country he was in, with the ease and fluency of his mother-tongue.[2]

St. Vincent exercised a wonderful power over the devils. His word caused them to fly from the bodies of the possessed. It was frequently sufficient for him to touch those who laboured under their dominion, to deliver them; even his very presence constrained them to de-

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 6.

[2] Ranzano wonders how the Bretons especially, whose language bears no affinity to the Latin, understood so well the discourses of this Thaumaturgus. Lib. iv. *ap. Bollandist.*

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part. But what is still more remarkable, is that, in order to put the evil spirits to flight, it was enough to lead those who were possessed to the different places where the Saint was in his journeys; and in places where he was not, they had only to pronounce his name in order to obtain the same result.

It is useless to dwell on the Saint's power in regard to physical maladies and bodily infirmities. He wrought miraculous cures by thousands. His power was so supreme in this respect, that he communicated it to others, and even to inanimate objects which he had used. Frequently when people came to ask these sort of favours of him, he would turn to one of his companions and say: "I have wrought sufficient miracles to-day, and am tired. Do yourself what is asked of me; the Lord Who works through me will also work through you." The Prior of the Convent of Lerida one day invited him to visit a lady, who was a great benefactress to the Order, and who was grievously ill. "My Father," said the Saint, "you ask me to go and see this person that I may cure her by a miracle; why do you not do it yourself? Go, I give you my power, not only for this infirm person, but also for all whom you may meet on the way." The Prior went to see the invalid, and on his way came across five individuals who were suffering from divers wounds. He cured them; then going to the dwelling of the benefactress, he restored her to perfect health, in the name of St. Vincent. By the divine favour, he imparted the power of working miracles to another Prior of his Order, throughout his whole life. As with St. Paul, so now

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with St. Vincent, God communicated the gift of healing even to articles of his dress. One of these was given to a poor but pious woman. The placing of this relic on the heads of the sick cured them, and their alms enabled her to live in comfort.[1]

The Saint resuscitated more than thirty persons during his lifetime. We have related two of these marvellous resurrections in the "Spiritual Instructions" for the fourth and fifth Friday before his Feast. We might instance others as extraordinary, but we must confine ourselves within reasonable limits.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii, Tratt. i, c. 20.

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SECTION THE SIXTH.

Death of St. Vincent Ferrer (1419).

CHAPTER XV.

THE SAINT DIES AT VANNES, IN BRITTANY—HIS BURIAL—CANONISATION—HIS RELICS.

DURING a period of sixty-nine years the great Apostle of the fifteenth century fought the painful battle of life; for fifty years did he bear the austere yoke of the religious life; and in the course of twenty years he travelled throughout Europe, proclaiming, like another St. Paul, Christ's kingdom on earth, and producing in the souls of men a salutary change, a holy and a happy revolution. It was but just, then, that the athlete should be recompensed, that the warrior should rest, that the conqueror should receive the palm of victory. Brittany was the land chosen, and Vannes was the city predestined, to receive the last breath of the man of God, and to preserve his mortal remains.

When St. Vincent became seriously ill, his disciples, seeing his strength rapidly decline day by day, earnestly besought him to return into his own country. They were

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in hopes that the climate of Valencia would be favourable to him, and were, moreover, deeply interested in securing for his own country the possession of his relics. St. Vincent was unwilling to pain the companions of his labours by opposing their wishes. Towards the end of March, in the year 1419, taking leave of the Duke of Brittany and the consuls of the city, he quitted Vannes in the night, in order to avoid popular excitement. But God's designs were clearly manifested to the Saint and his companions. It was revealed to him that he should die in the city which he was leaving; and on the following morning, the company, after a night's journey, were astonished to find themselves, at daybreak, at the gates of Vannes. The Saint, turning to his companions, said: "My brethren, let us not speak of returning into Spain; you clearly see that it is God's Will that I should end my days here." They answered him only with tears. Then, entering by the gate out of which they had passed the night before, he exclaimed: "*Hæc requies mea in sæculum sæculi;*" "this is my rest for ever and ever" (Psalm cxxxi.). The people were not slow in discovering who it was that had passed into the city; they ran to meet the Apostle whom they expected never more to behold; while the bells joyfully proclaimed his welcome return. The Duchess of Brittany met him, and conducted him to the house of a gentleman named Preulin, in order that he might be more conveniently lodged than with Robin Scarb. The Saint would not listen to the proposal. Instead of exhorting the people to repentance, as he was wont to do, he merely told them that he should soon die,

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and commended himself to the prayers of all. This announcement plunged the city into desolation and sorrow, and the multitudes hastened to pour forth their supplications to God that He would prolong the days of His servant.

The holy Apostle was meanwhile ordered to lie down on a bed; he who, until then, had never slept otherwise than on bare boards, or on the broken branches of trees. He humbly obeyed. A consuming fever, accompanied with violent pains, soon tormented him. He suffered in every member of his body, and seemed on the point of breathing his last. The physicians omitted nothing to save so precious a life, but St. Vincent declared all their remedies useless. He refused everything that could relieve his suffering condition; and it was only at the repeated solicitations of his friends that he could be induced to lay aside a hair shirt which he had worn for many years.

The Saint was joyous amidst his sufferings. His cheerfulness of heart was painted on his tranquil and serene countenance. Pain never troubled this heavenly peace; nor was he ever heard to complain, or to show the least sign of impatience; on the contrary, he esteemed himself most happy to resemble his sweet Saviour crucified. He consoled his disciples, who wept around his bed of pain, and exhorted them, for the last time, to charity, union, simplicity of heart, penance, and Christian mortification, zeal for spiritual progress, and perseverance. He also told them that he would pray for them.

Ten days before his death, the Bishop of Vannes and

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the consuls of the city came to ask his blessing. He received them courteously, and with a smiling countenance. This was on the 25th March. He then blessed them, and promised them his protection in heaven. From that time he devoted himself to silence, recollection, and prayer. He made frequent acts of contrition, as though he had been a great sinner. On Monday in Passion-week, he received the last Sacraments and the Plenary Indulgence for the hour of death. Having received the Holy Viaticum, he desired to be left alone for some hours, that he might entertain himself more freely with his Divine Lord. On Tuesday his sufferings became so intense that he could scarcely speak. They then inquired of him where he desired to be buried. "If there had been a Convent of St. Dominic at Vannes," said he, "I should have wished to be buried at the feet of my brethren; but as there is not, I leave the matter entirely in the hands of the Bishop and the Duke of Brittany." The fever increased so much in the course of the night, that on the following morning he could not articulate. He made signs to a religious to inspire him with holy thoughts, and to read to him the Passion of our Lord, while he pressed his crucifix to his breast with greater love than ever. Then followed the recommendation of the departing soul, in which the Saint joined with deep devotion. At the close of that solemn act, his features were suddenly transfigured; his forehead beamed with holy joy, and a divine light shone in his countenance and in his eyes: Paradise was open to his view, and he beheld the King of Glory, the Immaculate Queen of

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heaven, angels clothed with dazzling splendour, and his own beloved Patron Saints coming forth to meet him. He joined his hands as in prayer, and imprinted on his crucifix a parting kiss; then, raising his eyes to heaven, he murmured forth these words: "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum;*" "into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit" (Psalm xxx. 6); and gave up his soul to God. This occurred on Wednesday evening in Passion-week, the 5th of April, 1419.

As soon as his soul took its flight to heaven, his body assumed an appearance so beautiful, so serene and radiant, that it seemed the reflection of eternal glory; his flesh, so long macerated by fasts and disciplines, hair cloth, and the fatigues of the Apostolate, became fair and luminous, as though it were living. So far from inspiring the natural horror which a corpse usually does, his smiling face filled those who looked upon it with sentiments of love and holy envy. What tears were shed over those sacred remains! The whole city was inconsolable at having lost its treasure, and came to venerate the Saint's body; they kissed the hands and feet, and touched his forehead with pious objects; his praise was on the lips of all.

At the moment when the pure soul of our Saint was leaving his body, the windows of the room in which he expired suddenly opened of themselves, and a flock of small birds were seen to enter; they were not larger than butterflies, very beautiful, and whiter than snow; they filled not only the chamber, but the whole house. When the Saint drew his last breath these little birds

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disappeared, but left the place scented with a delicious perfume. All were of opinion that these were the angels, who had come in that form to meet the Saint, and conduct his soul in triumph to Paradise.

Another prodigy was witnessed at the same moment. John Liquillic, of Dinan, had in his possession several candles which had been used at the Saint's Mass, and which he carefully preserved in a case in his room, under lock and key. On the second of February, 1419, being desirous to light them in honour of the Blessed Virgin, he went to get them, but they were nowhere to be found. All his efforts to discover what had become of them were of no avail. But what was his astonishment when, on the 5th of April of the same year, he found all the candles in the case, where they were miraculously lighted! He called his wife to witness the marvel, but neither of them at the moment understood its meaning. When it was afterwards known that that was the very day on which St. Vincent died, the prodigy was easily explained.[1]

Grave discussions arose when there was question of deciding who should be privileged to possess the Saint's precious remains. The religious of his own Order wished to transport them to the convent of Valencia, to which he belonged, or at least to one of their houses that was nearest to Vannes, for there was no establishment of the Order in that city. The Franciscans, on the other hand, reclaimed against this proceeding, saying, that, as the union of the two Orders of St. Francis and St.

[1] All the Saint's biographers.

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Dominic obliged them to afford mutual hospitality in all places where one or the other of them had no monastery of their Order, it devolved on them to give a place of sepulture to the Saint, inasmuch as there was no Dominican Convent in Vannes. But the Bishop—aware of the answer that St. Vincent, before his death, had given to Father Ives of Millereu respecting himself—and the Duke of Brittany, decreed that the Saint's body should be buried in the Cathedral. He therefore ordered that the house in which the sacred remains lay should be closed, and a guard of soldiers set to watch it, and that the burial should take place at the hour of sunset. A solemn procession, consisting of the Bishops of Vannes and St. Malo, the secular and regular clergy, the nobility and people, accompanied the Saint's body to the Cathedral. It was exposed in the centre of the choir, the face and hands being uncovered. On the following morning, when the solemn obsequies had been performed, the Bishop of Vannes deposited with his own hands the precious remains in a marble vault, opposite the episcopal throne and near the high altar.

Numerous miracles soon proclaimed the glory of this holy man. In the evening of the day on which the obsequies took place, a leper, prostrating himself on the slab of the Saint's tomb, was suddenly cured. Multitudes of invalids followed his example, and returned cured. "Four hundred persons," says Guyard, "recovered their health by merely lying on the bed whereon the Saint died." The sculptor who carved the tomb drew from the Saint's gratitude a marvellous recompense.

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His leg was dangerously wounded, and no human remedy could heal it, although he had tried everything. He at length had recourse to St. Vincent. "Friend of God," said he, "good Father Vincent, pray to God for me!" He had scarcely said these words, when the pains in his leg suddenly left him, and in a few days the wound closed, and he was perfectly cured. These favours increased the devotion of the people; and to satisfy it they constructed an altar over the tomb. Other altars were erected in his honour in several of the Dominican Churches. The process of his canonisation soon followed, but various circumstances conspired to retard it. At length, Pope Calixtus III., whose elevation to the Supreme Pontificate he had so often foretold, together with the honours which he himself would receive from him, proclaimed the sanctity of the servant of God, on the 29th of June, 1455, and fixed the celebration of his Feast on the 5th of April, the anniversary of his death. The successor of Calixtus III., Pius II., published the Bull of canonisation.

The canonisation was celebrated at Vannes with indescribable solemnity. The Saint's body was taken from the tomb wherein it was buried; it was still entire as on the day of his death. It was placed in front of the altar to be exposed to the veneration of the faithful. Many miracles which were accomplished on that day increased their confidence and devotion. A year afterwards the relics were translated to another tomb more costly than the first, and more fitting to contain them. Grand fêtes were celebrated on the occasion, and a

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considerable number of distinguished personages took part in them.

The inhabitants of Vannes were more than once exposed to the danger of losing St. Vincent's body. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, a Spanish corps, sent by Philip II., having effectually protected the city against the attacks of the heretics, the Cathedral chapter were desirous of testifying their gratitude to the commander, Don Juan d'Aguilar, and offered him a large fragment of one of the rib bones. But the soldiers had conceived the design to carry off the whole body. Happily the canons were apprised of it in time. In the night they concealed the shrine which contained the relics, and did it so secretly that it remained unknown from the year 1590 till 1637. It was discovered at this date by the Bishop of Vannes. The holy relics were then verified, and a second translation took place on the 6th of September, a day which has been annually observed ever since to commemorate that event.

During the years of revolutionary trouble and disorder which stained the decline of the last century, the people of Vannes were fortunate enough to recover the relics of St. Vincent Ferrer from the hands of the sacrilegious robbers, who profaned the churches and altars to enrich themselves with the sacred spoils. St. Vincent's body was always regarded as a precious treasure in the Cathedral of Vannes. Time has not lessened the devotion of Brittany towards its great Apostle and glorious Patron. On the first Sunday of September, the Saint's relics are annually carried in procession through the

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streets of Vannes, escorted by the civil, military, and judicial authorities, and followed by an immense crowd of the townspeople. In times of public calamity especially these venerable relics are borne in solemn procession through the city to reanimate the hope and piety of its people. Priests only have the honour of carrying them. The houses before which they pass are hung with white draperies. During the cholera of 1857, a similar procession took place in Vannes, which was desolated by the epidemic, which had until then spared it; and this pious ceremony lessened the intensity of the plague.[1]

CHAPTER XVI.

DEVOTION OFFERED TO ST. VINCENT FERRER BY THE PEOPLE AND BY HOLY PERSONAGES—EXTRAORDINARY FAVOURS WITH WHICH THE SAINT REWARDED THE DEVOTION OF HIS CLIENTS.

VANNES is not the only place where the worship of St. Vincent Ferrer flourished. The city which gave birth to the Saint is also distinguished by its devotion to him. In 1460 the inhabitants of Valencia erected in the church of the Friar Preachers a magnificent chapel, dedicated to their fellow-countryman, into which they translated the bones of his father and mother in the year 1472. In accordance with the Saint's prophecy when yet a child, they transformed his house into a sanctuary, and placed in it a statue carved

[1] "Vie de Saint Vincent Ferrier," par M. l'Abbé Bayle, c. 29.

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in cypress, commemorative of the future destiny which the miraculous child had foretold. This was not accomplished without a miracle. When search was made in the timber-yards for the trunk of a tree proportioned to the object proposed, none could be found that was large enough. It was at length suggested to take the trunk of a cypress that had been cut down in the garden belonging to the Saint's house. When this piece of timber got into the carver's hands, it miraculously increased to the height and size of an ordinary man.

In 1525, the Canons of Vannes bestowed some of the Saint's bones on the Dominicans at Valencia. These relics were received with extraordinary solemnity; on which occasion a young girl, blind from her birth, and afflicted with a consuming fever, instantaneously received her sight and recovered her health.

In 1555, the centenary of the Saint's canonisation was celebrated in the same city with great pomp and magnificence. In 1565, when a Provincial Council prescribed a liturgical reform, the Archbishop of Valencia wished to reduce the Feast of St. Vincent Ferrer to the rank of an ordinary feast not of obligation. But the inhabitants of Valencia appealed to the Holy See, and St. Pius V., who then occupied the Pontifical Chair, sanctioned their petition by declaring the Feast of St. Vincent to be of *precept*, and confirming the celebration of its octave.

In 1594, Clement VIII. ruled that this Feast should be solemnised on the first Monday after the octave of

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Easter, when the requirements of the rubrics did not admit of its being kept on the 5th of April.

In 1600, Don Juan d'Aguilar, who had obtained from the Canons of Vannes a rib of St. Vincent, gave it to the Cathedral of Valencia, where it was received with due reverence and becoming dignity; on this occasion also, an infirm woman, who for nine months had been unable to move without the aid of crutches, was suddenly cured of her ailment by recommending herself to the Saint. A person born dumb also received his speech.

The piety of the faithful was not satisfied with merely keeping St. Vincent's Feast and making it one of obligation, they, moreover, celebrated every year the special circumstances of his life with great solemnity. In January, the memory of his baptism is honoured in the parish of St. Stephen with all the attendants of religious pomp. On the 5th of February, it was customary to hold a service in the Saint's cell, which was turned into a chapel, to commemorate the anniversary of his religious profession. On the 7th of April, he was honoured for the miraculous cure of Dona Blanca, which he performed on that day. At the end of June, the confraternity of the twelve associates of St. Vincent solemnise the anniversary of his canonisation. This confraternity was established by Blessed John Micon; each of the members were charged to keep in order for one month the sanctuaries of Valencia dedicated to St. Vincent. In the episcopal seminary of that city was preserved with pious care the Saint's doctoral cap, one

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of his capuces, the font at which he was baptised, the Bible which he constantly used, with marginal notes in his own handwriting, and one of his cappas with the black capuce. Statues of St. Vincent were multiplied at the corners of the streets, and in the public squares; the name of Vincent was commonly given to children. In short, this city spared nothing to glorify the most illustrious of its sons.

Blessed John of Pistoia, a Dominican who was celebrated for his preaching and miracles, spread devotion to our Saint in Tuscany, throughout the rest of Italy, and in Dalmatia. It was in consequence of this that, at Prato, between Pistoia and Florence, Blessed Silvester of Marradi, conjointly with Blessed Raphael of Faënza, founded, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, a Convent of Sisters of the Third Order under his protection, and it was in this convent that the glorious St. Catherine of Ricci flourished.

Another Religious spread the worship of the Saint in Sicily. He was from Vannes; when he was fourteen months old, his mother, seized with a fit of madness, cut him in pieces. His father, full of faith in St. Vincent, gathered up the different portions of the body, and carried them to the Saint's tomb. His child was miraculously restored to him, and it was this same child who, out of gratitude having entered the holy Order of St. Dominic, spent his whole life in propagating devotion to the Saint, who resuscitated him in so marvellous a manner.[1]

[1] Francisca Castilione, *apud Bollandist.* April, Tom. I. p. 512.

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Among the holy personages of our Order who have shown particular devotion to the great Apostle of the fifteenth century, we may single out Blessed Catherine Lenzi, Blessed Columba of Rieti, Blessed Lucy of Narni, Blessed Magdalen of Panatieri; Blessed John Micon, Blessed Alexander Capocchi; the holy Pontiff, Blessed Benedict XIII., who, on joining the Dominican Order, took the name of Vincent; but especially St. Louis Bertrand, like him a child of Valencia, the great Thaumaturgus and Apostle of Central America. The latter received from his parents the tender devotion which animated them towards St. Vincent Ferrer. When the moment arrived which was to decide his vocation, love of solitude drew him to the Chartreux; but his love for St. Vincent was stronger, for it was through love of him that he desired to enter into his Order. Having been appointed Master of Novices, he unceasingly explained to his disciples the Saint's "Treatise on the Spiritual Life," and profited by the examples it contained to lead them on in the practice of every virtue. "Let us see, my children," he would say at the conclusion of his discourse, "let us see which of us shall be the imitator of this great man, whose equal is not to be found in the world." When he was elected Prior, St. Louis consulted our Saint, who bid him accept the post, and even embraced him by means of one of his statues, at the same time promising him his protection. It is well known with what success St. Louis Bertrand used the prayers of St. Vincent Ferrer in curing the sick.[1]

[1] Teoli, lib. iii. Tratt. i. c. 13.

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Outside the Order, we may instance especially Blessed Nicholas Factor, a Franciscan, and the great St. Vincent de Paul, among those who professed a special devotion to the Saint. Blessed Nicholas Factor employed, after the example of St. Louis Bertrand, the prayers of St. Vincent Ferrer in healing the infirm. One day, a Franciscan lay-brother, who accompanied him on a visit to the sick, humorously asked him why he, a religious of the Seraphic Patriarch, did not exhort the sick to have recourse to St. Francis and St. Antony of Padua, rather than to St. Dominic and St. Vincent Ferrer, of another Order. "Hold your tongue, you blockhead," answered the holy man; "in heaven the saints are not jealous of one another; there we shall all be of one Order, and there will be no distinction of habit. All will be clad in the same garments of glory."

St. Vincent de Paul acknowledged St. Vincent Ferrer as his own special patron. He made his life a daily study, and had constantly in his hands the "Treatise on the Spiritual Life," in order that he might conform thereto not only his own heart and actions, but also those of the priests of his institute.[1]

In his life of St. Vincent Ferrer, the pious Father Teoli devotes numerous pages to the recital of the favours obtained by those who invoked the Saint, and have done honour to him, either in venerating his statues by burning lamps before them, or promising to celebrate his novenas and to practise the devotion of the Fridays dedicated to him. We shall record some of

[1] Teoli, lib. iii. Tratt. i. c. 14 ed 15, &c.

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the most remarkable of these, in order to incite our dear readers to have recourse to this good Father in their spiritual or temporal needs.

Valencia, the cherished city of St. Vincent, never forsook him, and he relieved it in all its necessities. It was he who, by his intercession, procured for it so many holy religious, who, in the course of ages, have laboured for the maintenance of the Catholic Faith in its bosom, and for the reformation of its morals. He has, moreover, averted from it the visible punishments of divine vengeance, which at times threatened it by reason of its sins.

In the year 1651, Valencia suffered from a dearth of provisions, which affected the entire population. At the moment when want was most keenly felt, there were at Cagliari, in Sardinia, some corn-merchants who were ready to put out to sea with three vessels laden with corn. While they were debating among themselves concerning the port to which they should sail, they arrived at the convent of St. Dominic, and were accosted by a strange religious of gentle and dignified bearing, who said to them, "I am a native of Valencia, in Spain. I would counsel you to ship your provisions thither; you will dispose of them to great advantage, for the inhabitants of that city are at this moment visited with a terrible famine." They promised to follow his advice. On the morning before setting sail, they deemed it expedient to see the religious of that city, in order to pay their respects to him and receive his commissions. They inquired of the brother porter, who could give

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them no information, "for," said he, "we have never seen a religious from Valencia." They then retired; but when they had gone a few paces, they perceived in a niche a statue of St. Vincent Ferrer, which perfectly resembled the religious who had spoken to them on the previous evening. Arrived at Valencia on the 17th of January, they failed not to acquaint its inhabitants with what had happened to them; and the latter doubted not that the solicitude of their holy Patron had induced him to come to their assistance by appearing to those merchants. Valencia was, fifty years afterwards, subjected to a great drought. Penances and public prayers were offered up, but without any result. There was at that moment a child of eight years old, named Vincent Villarasa, who was suffering from malignant fever, and was on the point of expiring. His father and mother, not having courage to witness the death of their child, retired from the room, leaving him to the care of one of his aunts. But at the moment when the latter thought the child had breathed its last, she suddenly heard him call to her. "Aunt," said the child, "the Saint!" "What do you say?" she replied. He repeated the same words, "Aunt, the Saint!" Hearing this colloquy, the relations and other persons who were in an adjoining room hastened to his bedside, and inquired of the child who the saint was who appeared to him. "It is a saint," answered he, "clothed in black and white; he holds his hands pointing towards heaven, and bears on his head a bright flame." From these words they gathered that he spoke of St. Vincent Ferrer, towards

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whom the child's father had great devotion. All present knelt down on the side of the bed where the child said the Saint had appeared to him. The father then inquired if the Saint had really spoken. "Yes," said the little Vincent; "he told me that I am already cured, and that it will rain to-morrow." This twofold promise was accomplished. On the following morning the parents conducted their child to the Church of St. Dominic to offer their thanksgiving to St. Vincent, and on that very morning a copious rain fell, which lasted three days, and revived the hopes of a good harvest. This fact was authentically attested in a public act. Thus the inhabitants of Valencia, mindful of the constant protection of their heavenly citizen, have, from time immemorial, supplicated their esteemed Patron by the following antiphon:—

Hic est qui prævaluit amplificare
Civitatem, quique adeptus est gloriam
In conversatione gentis, gloriosus in
Cœlis, et Pater noster, Vincentius. Alleluia.

This is he who prevailed to enlarge the city, and obtained glory in his conversation with the people, and is now clothed with glory in heaven, our Patron, Vincent. Alleluia.

The religious of the Dominican Convent at Valencia frequently had the consolation of seeing St. Vincent descend from heaven, join in their holy exercises, accompany them to the refectory, the dormitory, and the church. "During the greater part of the night," observed Blessed Dominic Anadon, "we have St. Vincent in the dormitory, on the side of his old cell.

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We ought," he adds, " to cover that part of the convent with gold and precious stones."[1]

St. Vincent appeared to Blessed Columba of Rieti, who ardently desired to enter the Third Order of St. Dominic, and, assuring her that her desires were granted, he exhorted her to carefully prepare herself for it. He also announced to Blessed Magdalen of Panatieri, her approaching death; and on leaving her, he left her cell filled with a celestial perfume.

He, on one occasion, introduced St. Catherine of Ricci into heaven in presence of our Lord, and showed her the particular glory which the saints and blessed of the Order enjoy; during her agony, the Saint invoked him, and obtained through his powerful intercession the gift of final perseverance.[2]

St. Vincent loaded St. Louis Bertrand with his favours. The latter being once grievously ill, was visited by his great friend, Blessed John Ribera, Archbishop of Valencia. In the course of the prelate's visit, a Dominican entered the chamber, and seating himself on the side of the bed, began to console St. Louis with kind words. The sufferer, forgetting the presence of the Archbishop, who was at the other side of the bed, turned his back upon him to listen to the religious. The latter having disappeared some moments afterwards, St. Louis, perceiving the fault he had committed, said to the Archbishop: " Do not take amiss, my Lord, what I did; the religious who conversed with me is St. Vincent Ferrer, I am quite sure of it; he has announced to me

[1] Teoli, lib. iii. Tratt. i. c. 11. [2] Teoli, c. 12.

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the happiest news I could possibly desire—the hour of my passage to Paradise is at hand." At that last moment St. Vincent, with the Son of God and His most holy Mother, assisted him.

St. Louis was one day invited by the same prelate to spend some time in the country. Not being able to go himself, he sent another religious of his Order to take his place, assuring the prelate that the conversation of the latter would be of great spiritual profit to him. The Archbishop, indeed, experienced an extraordinary sweetness in conversing with this religious, and at each of his words felt the fire of divine love enkindle in his heart in the most lively manner. When the religious departed, he left his host filled with consolation and astonishment; never, not even with St. Louis Bertrand, had he experienced such an abundance of heavenly favours. When the prelate returned to Valencia, his first care was to repair to the Convent of St. Dominic to renew the conversation he had with the religious who had been with him in the country. He then asked St. Louis to let him see him again, saying that he had been consoled by him more than he could possibly describe. "I can well believe it, my Lord," said St. Louis, "for that religious was St. Vincent Ferrer, who was pleased to favour your Grace with that visit, in order to recompense and confirm, at the same time, the devotion which you profess towards him."[1]

A nun of the celebrated Convent of Prouille, being grievously ill, was miraculously cured by commending

[1] Teoli, lib. iii. Tratt. i. c. 13.

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PREFACE.

I PURPOSE giving in this treatise, salutary counsels drawn solely from the writings and expressions of the holy doctors of the Church; yet to carry out my design, I shall not cite any of the Fathers in particular, nor the testimonies of Holy Scripture; for I wish to use but few words, and to address myself to the humble and simple of heart, whose only desire is to accomplish what may appear to him to be most available for rendering himself pleasing to God. I shall therefore set aside proofs, my desire being not to dispute with the proud, but to instruct the humble heart which is already convinced.

He who would become a useful guide to souls, and edify them by his speech, must first of all possess in himself the virtues which he is desirous to inspire in them; without this he will accomplish little. His words will have no effect, unless he appears to practise what he teaches, and to be gifted with even a greater personal sanctity than that which he exacts from others.

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CHAPTER I.

ON POVERTY.

HE who aspires to be the director of others is bound to despise all earthly goods as so much dross, to accept of nothing but what a rigid necessity allows, and to suffer some inconvenience for the sake of poverty. A certain author observes: "To be poor is a thing which in itself merits no praise; but what renders it meritorious is the fact of loving poverty, and of suffering with joy, for Christ's sake, whatever wants poverty entails on us."

Unhappily, there are many who glory only in the name of poverty, who embrace it merely on the condition that they shall want for nothing. They desire to pass for the friends of poverty, but strenuously shun its daily accompaniments, viz. hunger and thirst, contempt and humiliation. Such is not the example given by Him Who, being sovereignly rich, became poor for our sakes. Such is not what we discover in the acts and instructions of the Apostles; neither is it the model that we find in the life of our Father St. Dominic: this requires no proof.

Ask nothing of any one, except when absolute necessity obliges you; neither accept the presents which people offer you, unless it be to distribute them among the poor. By acting thus, both they whose gifts you refuse, and they who hear of your disinterestedness, will

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be edified; thus will you the more easily lead them to despise the world and to relieve the poor.

All that is implied in the term *necessary*, may be reduced to a frugal diet and plain clothing, without caring to provide for the future, but having only what is needful for the wants of each day.

I do not include among necessaries a goodly store of books; since, under this pretext, avarice not unfrequently lurks. The books of the community, and those that may be borrowed, are sufficient to instruct you. He who would qualify himself in study, ought first of all to practise, with a humble heart, the lessons that have been taught him. If contrariwise, he contradicts these by a spirit of pride, he will never acquire the light of intelligence. Jesus Christ, who has taught us humility by His own example, conceals His truth from the proud, and reveals it only to the humble.

CHAPTER II.

ON SILENCE.

HAVING laid the solid foundation of poverty inculcated by Jesus Christ Himself when, seated on the mountain, he said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" it behoves us to strive vigorously to repress the tongue. This organ ought only to be employed in useful speech, and never to become the instrument of vain and idle words. In order the better to restrain the tongue, accustom yourself to reply rather

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than to express an opinion, and then only in answer to some useful and necessary question; all frivolous questions will be best answered by silence. Yet, if you should sometimes indulge in a little pleasantry, by way of recreation, regulate your tone and manner in such a way as not to wound the sensibilities of others. Avoid everything that would lead people to regard you as singular, severe, or as one who exceeds the bounds of piety. Should they complain of you, or blame your behaviour, it will then be needful to redouble your prayers for such persons, that God in His goodness may chase from their hearts all that is an occasion of trouble or annoyance to them. Nevertheless, speak whenever a pressing necessity invites you, such as charity to your neighbour, or the obedience which you have promised to your Superior. In such cases, think beforehand what you ought to say, and express yourself in few words, and in a gentle and respectful tone, which will indicate the humility of your heart. You should also observe the same rule when any one questions you. If you remain silent for a time, it should be done with a view to edify your neighbour, and to foresee what may be conveniently said when the moment for speaking shall arrive. Beseech God to supply your silence, and to interiorly make known to others that the obligation you are under of subduing the tongue prohibits you from speaking to them.

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CHAPTER III.

ON PURITY OF HEART.

WHEN by voluntary poverty and silence you have banished from your heart the useless cares and vain alarms which prevent virtue from taking root and fructifying therein, as in a fertile soil, it remains for you to establish in your soul the virtues that are necessary to enable you to attain the degree of purity spoken of by our Lord in His gospel, that degree by which you will be interiorly enlightened, and enabled to contemplate the things of God. It is by this divine contemplation that you will acquire tranquillity and peace, and that He, who makes His habitation in peace, will Himself deign to dwell within you. You will clearly perceive that I purpose not to speak here of that purity which excludes from the heart those criminal thoughts that are interdicted to all; but of that strict purity which separates man, as far as it is possible in this mortal life, from all frivolous thoughts, and allows him to think only of God, or what will lead him to Him. But, in order to obtain this gift of celestial purity, worthy of being styled Divine, since he who attaches himself to God becomes one and the same spirit with Him, hearken to what appears to me to be absolutely necessary.

First, it behoves you to deny yourself, according to Our Lord's precept: "If thou wilt come after Me, deny thyself" (Matt. xvi. 24). The meaning of these words is, that it is necessary to mortify oneself in every

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particular, to trample under foot, so to speak, our own will, and to contradict it in everything, by sweetly submitting oneself to that of others, provided that what they exact of us is just, permissible, and within the rules of decorum. But a general rule in all things temporal, and which have reference to the wants of the body, is that of never following our own will when we perceive it to be in opposition to that of others. Suffer every kind of inconvenience to preserve an interior tranquillity of soul, too frequently disturbed by these contradictions, when, by adhering to your own judgment and conceits, you engage in useless disputes.

It is not only in temporal matters that it is fitting not to follow our own will; but even in things spiritual, or what is akin thereto, it is more advantageous to rule oneself by the will of another, provided it be good, although our own judgment may appear better and more perfect; for contentions and disputes cause us to lose much more, by weakening humility, tranquillity, and peace of heart, than we should be able to gain by the most perfect exercises of virtue, when in this we pursue our own will in opposition to the will of another. I speak here of those persons who, united with you in the exercises of virtue, are aspiring like yourself to perfection, and not of those who call evil good, and good evil, and who show greater diligence in examining and condemning the words and actions of other people, than in correcting their own unruly ways. I do not counsel you to be guided by the judgment of every sort of person in spiritual matters; but in temporal concerns, it is differ-

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ent: here it will be always more to your advantage to submit to the will of another, than to follow your own. But should you meet with opposition in the performance of good works, whether for your own advancement, for God's glory, or the benefit of your neighbour, or even should you be absolutely hindered therefrom, be this on the part of your superiors, your equals, or inferiors, do not dispute with them about it; but hold your peace, and attaching yourself more closely to God, say to Him, "Lord, I suffer violence, answer Thou for me." Grieve not, for in the end this will infallibly turn to your own and others' advantage. I say more: that which you see not now, will one day be visible to you; that which appears an obstacle to your designs, will be the very means that will lead to their final accomplishment. I might instance here examples gathered from the fruitful field of Holy Scripture, as that of Joseph, and many others, but I wish not to swerve from my purpose of avoiding quotations. My own experience itself affords sure testimony of the accuracy of my words.

When you are prevented from labouring for God's glory, either by reason of bodily infirmity, or from some other cause which marks His Divine pleasure, be not grieved; but cast yourself with confidence into the arms of Him who knows what is most to your advantage, and who draws you to Himself in proportion as you abandon yourself without reserve to His direction. Let your chief concern, under these circumstances, be to preserve peace and tranquillity of heart. Be afflicted only on account of your sins, and the sins of others, and whatever

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is calculated to lead you into sin. I repeat once more, be not distressed at the accidents that befall you; neither allow yourself to be influenced nor surprised by movements of indignation at the faults of others; but show affection and pity to all, ever bearing in mind that, unless Jesus Christ sustained you by His grace, you would doubtless be guilty of greater excesses than they. Be ready to suffer opprobrium, harsh and disagreeable things, and every sort of contradiction for Christ's sake; for without this you can never be His disciple.

Should vain desires or lofty ideas spring up in your heart, under whatsoever pretext of charity this may be, stifle them at their birth, crush with the Cross of Christ this head of the infernal dragon. To this end, call to mind the deep humiliation and the excessive sufferings of the Man-God. Treasure up this thought always: Jesus despised the honours of royalty, and chose voluntarily the punishment of the Cross, by despising the ignominy and shame attached thereto.

Fly with care the praises of men, hold them in abhorrence as you would a mortal poison; but rejoice when you are slighted, being convinced in the depth of your heart that you are worthy of being despised and trampled under foot by all. Never lose sight of your sins and defects. Endeavour, as much as possible, to penetrate their enormity. Be not afraid of making them appear greater than they perhaps are. But as for the shortcomings of others, strive not to see them, and to cast them, so to speak, behind you. If you cannot avoid seeing them, endeavour at least to lessen them,

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and to excuse them as much as you are able, and, thus filled with compassion and indulgence for your neighbour, do all in your power to help him. Turn away your eyes and thoughts from the sight of others, that you may the more attentively consider yourself. Examine into your own acts, and judge yourself without indulgence. In all your thoughts and words, and in your spiritual reading, strive to rebuke and correct what is amiss in you, and to discover in yourself subjects of sorrow and compunction; calling to mind that the good you do is very defective, that it is never performed with the fervour that God requires, and that consequently it is corrupted by an infinity of faults and negligences, so that it might be justly compared to the most defiled thing in this world. Be careful, then, to rebuke yourself severely before God, not only for the faults and negligences, which creep into your words and actions, but also for the thoughts that are not only bad, but useless: reputing yourself more vile and miserable than all other sinners, whatever may be their sins; being persuaded that if God dealt with you according to His justice, instead of His mercy, you would merit the severest punishment, and to be excluded from the joys of eternal life; since having bestowed on you many more graces than He has given to multitudes of others, He finds nothing in you but ingratitude.

Again, call often to mind, with fear and trembling, that whatever disposition you have for good, whatever grace and desire to acquire virtue, it is Jesus Christ Who, in His mercy, gives it to you; that this in no way

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comes from yourself, and that it was in His power, had He chosen, to bestow the same grace on the most criminal of mankind, while He might have left you in an abyss of filth and misery.

Be always more and more strongly persuaded that there never was a person burdened with crime, who did not serve God better than yourself, and who would not have been more thankful for His benefits, had he received from Him the same graces which, by a gratuitous mercy, He has heaped upon you, in which your own merits have no share. You will, then, without delusion, be able to consider yourself the most miserable of men, and to dread, with reason, being rejected from the presence of Jesus Christ, on account of your ingratitude and sins. Still I do not say that this sentiment ought to induce you to believe that you are without God's grace, and in a state of mortal sin, or that there may not be an infinity of sinners who commit numberless sins. But, in examining others, we frequently pass an uncertain and mistaken judgment, both, because there are many things which are hidden from us, and because God may have at any moment touched our brother's heart, and given him the grace of true contrition.

When you humble yourself in this sort before God, by contrasting yourself with other sinners, it is not fitting that you should enter in detail into their sins. It is sufficient to consider them in general, in order to compare them with your own ingratitude. If, however, you closely inspect the sins of others, you will be able, in some measure, to appropriate them, and to reproach

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yourself with them. This person, you will say, is a murderer: am not I one also—I, who have so often brought death to my soul? That other is impure, an adulterer: what more am I—I, who have scarcely done anything else but daily commit spiritual adultery, by turning my back upon God, and yielding myself to the suggestions of the devil? You will be able in like manner to survey every other sin. But, should you perceive that, by these reflections, the devil tempts you to despair, then occupy yourself no longer with them; reanimate yourself with the confidence you have in God, reflect on His goodness and great mercy, which have already prevented you by so many benefits, and be assured that He will accomplish in you the work which you have begun. Ordinarily speaking, no one who has made any progress in the spiritual life, and who is at all acquainted with the ways of God, need have any fear of falling into despair.

These few reflections with which I have supplied you, will form in you this excellent virtue, which must be regarded as the source, the mother and guardian of all others: I mean humility; a virtue which, purifying the heart from all vain and useless thoughts, opens the eyes of the soul, and adapts them to the contemplation of the Majesty of God. For, when a person enters into himself with a view to discover his corruption, to despise himself, and bewail his miseries—when he attentively examines the workings of his own heart—he lights upon so much that intimately concerns himself, that he can no longer think of anything else. Thus, forgetting and

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driving far from him every image of what he has seen and heard, and even of the exterior acts that he has performed, he begins to enter into a state of recollection, to come nearer to the innocence of childhood, and to participate in the purity of the blessed spirits. Thus, totally occupied with reflections on himself, his eyes are opened to view the things of God; while he gradually disposes his heart to rise to the contemplation of what is most sublime, whether it be in the angels, or in God Himself. The soul is by this means inflamed with a love of celestial goods, and looks upon those of the earth as of no account. Then, perfect charity begins to burn in the heart, and its divine heat consumes therein all the rust of sin. But when charity is thus in possession of the soul, vanity no longer finds access to it. All its thoughts, words, and acts are produced by the movements of charity. It can then instruct others without the fear of vainglory. For, I have already said that vainglory can never gain entrance to a heart that is under the complete dominion of charity. Could it tempt, with the bait of temporal gain, him, who despises it as dirt? Could the desire of praise move him, who, before God, esteems himself far beneath the vilest thing, a most unworthy, miserable sinner, liable to fall at any moment into the grossest crimes, unless the helping hand of his Creator continually sustains him? How can he be puffed up at the thought of his good works, when he clearly perceives his inability to perform the smallest good, without being incited, and, as it were, pushed on every moment by the grace of an Omnipotent God?

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How can he take credit to himself for his good works, who has a thousand times experienced the inability to do any good, great or small, by his own power, even when he desires it; and who on the other hand, when he has no such inclination, when he gives himself no concern about it, and is intent upon something else, is suddenly roused by the help of God to perform what his own fruitless efforts had previously attempted? God, indeed, permits that these impossibilities in man to do good should endure for a long period, in order to teach him to humble himself, to abstain from seeking his own glory, and to refer all that he does to Himself, not through mere habit, but with all the affection of his heart: it is then he perceives without a shadow of doubt, that not only can he not perform any act, but that he is even incapable of pronouncing the Name of Jesus except by the Holy Spirit, and unless He, who has said: "Without Me ye can do nothing," gives him the power. It behoves him to testify his thankfulness to God, and to say, "Lord, ... Thou hast wrought all our works for us" (Isaias xxvi. 12). And let him further exclaim with the royal prophet: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy Name give glory" (Psalm cxiii. 1). They, then, who are intent upon God's glory and the salvation of souls, have nothing to fear on the part of vainglory.

I have expressed in few words the dispositions that are requisite in him who would lead a perfect life, and whose only aim is to labour for the salvation of his soul. What I have said will suffice for him who has acquired a knowledge of the things of God, and who has long

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habituated himself to the exercises of the spiritual life; for all the practices of perfection may be reduced to the principles which I have laid down in an abridged form. When he has faithfully observed the three rules which I have given, viz. poverty, silence, and the interior exercises which lead to purity of heart, he will easily judge in what manner he ought to perform his outward actions. But as all are not equally capable of understanding what is said in few words, we shall examine somewhat further in detail the particular acts of virtue.

CHAPTER IV.

PERFECTION IS MORE EASILY ATTAINED THROUGH THE HELP OF A DIRECTOR THAN BY OUR OWN UNAIDED EFFORTS.

IT is very certain that he who would arrive at perfection will attain it more easily and in a shorter space of time by the assistance of a director, who will guide him in everything, and to whom he must be obedient in the smallest matters, than if left to himself, however great may be the spirit of intelligence with which God has gifted him. Nay more: Jesus Christ will never bestow His grace—without which we can accomplish nothing—on him who, having a guide at hand, neglects this means, by persuading himself that he is well qualified to strike out for himself a path that will lead him to salvation. Obedience is the royal road by which man can reach, without obstacle, the summit of that mystical ladder whereon the Lord is seen to rest.

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It is the road traversed by the Fathers in the Desert; and those, who, in a short time, have attained perfection, knew no other. If God, however, by a special grace, has Himself deigned to guide certain souls who were destitute of the means of direction, it was only to supply, by His bounty, the external helps that were wanting to them. He deals thus with souls who are united to Him with a humble and fervent heart. There are, doubtless, few to be found in these lamentable times to lead souls in the way of perfection. While, on the other hand, there are many who seduce from the path of virtue those who are desirous to follow it, but who have no one to direct them. It is needful, then, to have recourse to God with their whole soul, and to entreat Him with earnestness and humility to act towards them the part of a guide. Yes, they must throw themselves trustfully into the arms of His mercy, that this God Who desires not that any one should perish, but that all should attain a knowledge of His truth, may in His clemency, receive them as orphans who have no father but Himself. To you, then, who yearn in the fulness of your hearts to find God, to you I address myself: to you, who ardently sigh after perfection with a view to serve your neighbour; to you, in whom no guile is to be found, but who seek after God in the simplicity of your hearts; to you, who aim at what is most perfect in virtue; to you, in short, who desire to arrive at eternal glory by the path of humility; to you, once more, I address myself.

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CHAPTER V.

ON OBEDIENCE.

WHEN he who enlists in the army of Jesus Christ shall have established in himself the two principal foundations of virtue, viz. poverty and silence, of which we have spoken, he must prepare himself to follow in everything the road and rule of obedience, to abide immovable therein, and to accomplish, with all the exactitude possible, the rules, constitutions, and rubrics, in every place, and at all times, in and outside the refectory, in the dormitory and in the choir, to observe faithfully all the prescribed inclinations and prostrations; in a word, he must have by heart everything that our Fathers have prescribed, frequently reminding himself of those words of Jesus Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." In short, he must rule his exterior in such a way, that every action and movement of his body may express entire obedience to Jesus Christ, and that in the observance of regular discipline there may reign in him a certain decorum resulting from the regularity of his conduct; for he will never be able to suppress the irregularities of his heart, without having first subjected the body to a course of discipline so exact, as to deter him, I will not say from acting, but from even the slightest movement, which is not in strict accordance with order and decorum.

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CHAPTER VI.

ON THE MANNER OF REGULATING THE BODY.

TO regulate the body, you must first strive to resist, with energy and perseverence, intemperance in eating and drinking; for unless you are victorious over this irregularity, you will labour in vain to acquire other virtues. Observe then what I have to tell you. Be content with the usual fare that is given to your brethren, and avoid seeking anything special for yourself. Shuold any one outside the convent be disposed to send you something out of the usual course, take nothing for yourself; but if they should be willing to bestow it on the Community, let this be done. When you are invited by your brethren to dine outside the refectory, do not yield, under any pretext whatsoever, but stay always in the refectory, observing therein all the fasts which the rule prescribes, so long as it shall please God to preserve your health. For, when you are sick, it will be permitted to treat you according to your needs, asking nothing, and being content to receive with thanks whatever is given to you.

But in order not to exceed in eating or drinking, examine attentively your bodily temperament, and see what you have need of for your support, so that you may justly distinguish between what is necessary and superfluous. A general rule to be observed in this particular is, to take at least as much bread as is requisite for your

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support, according to your bodily requirements, especially on fasting days; and listen not to the suggestions of the devil, who would persuade you that you should not eat bread.

You may thus discover what is necessary for you, and what is superfluous, by the following test: Do you experience, on days when two meals are taken, a drowsiness after None,[1] and feel in the stomach a certain heat, which hinders you from being able to pray, read, or write? This comes ordinarily from some excess. Do you feel in a similar condition after Matins, on days when you have supped, or even after Compline, on days of fasting? Be assured that the same drowsiness proceeds from a like cause. Eat then, especially bread, according as you have need, so that after the repast you may be in a condition to read, write, and pray as before. If, however, you feel less disposition to these exercises during those hours than at other times, provided you do not experience the drowsiness to which I have alluded, you need not consider that a sign of excess.

Examine then, by this or other means, what is necessary to sustain you, and beseech God with simplicity that He would deign to instruct you in this. Be faithful in adopting the means with which He will inspire you. Always esteem what is served to you at table as coming from His hands; and when, by negligence, you have been guilty of any excess, omit not to impose on yourself a penance proportionate to the fault.

[1] It was customary in St. Vincent's time to recite None about an hour after the first meal.

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CHAPTER VII.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN REGARD TO DRINK.

IT is difficult to lay down precise rules on this point, unless it be to retrench something little by little every day, yet in such a way as not to suffer too much from thirst, either by day or during the night. You will easily be able to stint yourself to a small quantity of drink when you partake of soup; nevertheless, it is needful to drink sufficient to aid the digestion of food. Drink not out of meal-times, except at eventide on fasting days, or when exhausted with the fatigue of a journey or lassitude, and then with moderation. Diminish or increase what you take, according as the Lord shall inspire you.

CHAPTER VIII.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED AT TABLE.

WHEN the bell rings to summon the Community to meals, having washed your hands with gravity, station yourself in the cloister till the other bell invites you to the refectory. Then, bless the Lord with all your strength, and let modesty appear in your exterior and in your voice. Take your place at table according to the rank which you hold in the Community. Dispose yourself also to listen to the lecture

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that is read during meals, or, in its absence, to meditate on some pious thought, in order that you may not be altogether intent on eating, lest while you nourish the body the soul should be entirely deprived of its food.

Having seated yourself at table, adjust your habit with becoming decency, and arrange the cappa a little over the knees. Make it a rule never to look at those who sit with you at table, but only at what is set before you. Be in no hurry to begin immediately after taking your seat, but wait till you have said a *Pater* and an *Ave* for the souls in purgatory, who are in most need of help.

Strive, as a general rule, that in all your acts and movements modesty may appear. Should several kinds of bread be placed before you, eat that which is nearest you, choosing that for which you have the least relish, and which will minister less to sensuality. Ask for nothing while you are at table, but wait till some one else asks for what is necessary for you; and should he omit to do so, bear it with patience. Rest not the elbows on the table, and let your hands be thereon only with a view to serve you. Neither stretch out your legs nor place your feet one upon the other. Accept not of two portions, nor anything but what is given to each of the other religious. Eat nothing that has been specially put before you, but conceal it as skilfully as you can among the rest, and leave it on the plate.

It is a custom most pleasing to God to reserve a little of one's soup to be given to Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor. The same may be done with regard to bread; preserve the best for Jesus Christ, and eat the

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rest. Be not annoyed when any one complains of this practice, provided your Superior be not opposed to it. Usually bestow upon the poor Jesus some portion of your food, and let not this be the worst, but the best. There are people who give to Jesus Christ the very worst of what they have, and thus treat Him, if I may so speak, as they would the animals. Supposing that with one of the portions served to you, you eat a sufficient quantity of bread, the other may be given to Jesus Christ; and thus, with His grace, you will be able to practise an abstinence that will be most pleasing to Him, and at the same time unknown to men.

Should that which is served to you appear insipid and without relish—through want of salt, for example, or some other seasoning — leave it as it is, without wishing to season it yourself; call to mind on such occasions the vinegar and gall which Jesus Christ was pleased to drink. Resist sensuality, and secretly deprive yourself of all condiments, whose properties are only to excite pleasure in eating.

When something agreeable to the taste is brought to you at the end of the meal, deprive yourself of it for the love of God. Act in like manner with regard to cheese, fruits, and such things as liqueurs, and better-flavoured wines; in a word, with everything which, not being necessary to health, may be calculated to injure it. For it not unfrequently happens that what is pleasing to the palate is hurtful to health. If you abstain from these things for the love of Jesus Christ, He will doubtless Himself nourish you with the sweets

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of spiritual consolation, and you will find all other foods agreeable with which you content yourself for the love of Him.

In order the more easily to abstain from what you have resolved not to eat, imagine when you are at table, that, on account of your sins, you deserve to eat dry bread, and to drink nothing but water. Thus, regard bread as your sole nourishment, and the other food which you take beyond this, as a means only to enable you to eat with less difficulty. If you have the thought of your sins deeply at heart, and the mortification which is necessary for their expiation, it will seem to you that you are treated with great indulgence when anything better than bread is given to you.

Take only a moderate quantity of soup on your plate, and be satisfied with mixing bread with it. When you are without a portion, you may eat the whole or half of your bread. On days when two meals are allowed, partake of what is necessary for your sustenance, should nothing else be offered you.

There are many like acts which it is difficult to point out, but which Jesus Christ will Himself teach you if you have recourse to Him with your whole heart, and place your entire reliance on Him. It is impossible to express the numberless means which He will make known to you, if you hearken attentively to Him.

Be not of the number of those who appear never to finish their meal; on the contrary, cease eating as soon as possible, yet with becoming decency, in order to bestow your whole attention on the reading that is

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going on. When you leave the table, return thanks with your whole heart to the All-powerful Lord, Who has made you a sharer of His bounty, and has given you the grace to overcome sensuality. Spare not your voice in praising and blessing, as soon as possible, Him, Who so liberally dispenses His benefits. Think, my dear brother, that there is an infinity of poor people who would esteem it good cheer to have only the bread that God has bestowed on you, without the other kinds of food. Be assured that it is Jesus Christ Who has given you all that was served to you, and that it was He who waited on you at table. See, then, what modesty, what respect and gravity, you ought to have in a place where you know that God Himself is present! What a happiness it would be for you, were it given you, to witness all these things with the eyes of your soul! You would then behold the Son of God Himself, followed by a multitude of saints, entering the room wherein you take your repast, and filling it with His august Presence.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE MEANS OF PERSEVERING IN SOBRIETY AND ABSTINENCE.

IN order to continue in abstinence and sobriety, live always in fear, remembering that this virtue comes only from God; and beg of Him grace to persevere in its practice. If you would be upheld therein without failure, neither judge nor condemn others; stifle

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the movements of indignation which you feel against those who observe not the necessary rules in regard to eating. Pity them, pray for them, and excuse them as much as you are able. Bear in mind that you are no more than others in this respect; that it is Jesus Christ Who upholds you by His grace, not in consideration of your merits, but solely by His mercy.

You will remain firm, if you cherish these thoughts. For, why have so many, who courageously began and made great progress in abstinence and other virtues, fallen into bodily dejection and weariness of spirit? It is because presumption and pride made them confident of themselves, and filled them with indignation against others whose judges they constituted themselves, and whom they interiorly condemned. Hence, God withdrawing from them the gifts of His grace, they lost their primitive fervour; and falling into the opposite extremity and into a state of indifference, they have become sick and infirm; so that in the end, by striving to recruit their health, they have exceeded in this the bounds of strict moderation, and are become more delicate and intemperate than those whom they previously condemned. I have known many such who have fallen into this misfortune; God permitting, as usual, that they who rashly condemn others should fall into the same faults which they reprove, and sometimes even into much greater. Serve then the Lord with fear and trembling; and when you are elated at the remembrance of His bounties which He has bestowed on you, reprehend and correct yourself, fearing lest He be irritated against you, and you perish

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by departing from the right path. Act thus, and you will remain firm and stable; for these are the means most agreeable to the All-powerful Lord, whereby you can resist intemperance.

CHAPTER X.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN REGARD TO SLEEP, WATCHING, STUDY, AND CHOIR.

WE must endeavour not to fall into excess touching the matter of sleep and watching. It is difficult, I admit, to observe a just measure in this; for both body and soul are in great peril when they exceed the limits of discretion, either by too great an abstinence, or by excessive watching. It is not so in the exercise of other virtues where excess is not so much to be feared. The reason is, that when the devil perceives a person in great fervour of spirit, he uses all his craft to induce him to watch much and to practise great abstinence. He thereby causes him to fall into such a state of bodily weakness, as to be unfit for anything, and in the end it is necessary, as I have already observed, that he should eat and sleep more than others. Now, no such person will ever venture to return again to the exercises of fasting and watching, knowing that these have occasioned his illness; and the devil unites in persuading him to avoid them, and inspires him with the notion that there is no other cause of the malady, although it may not be precisely the result of either fasting or watching, but of the excess to which they have been pushed.

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An inexperienced person, who knows not the deceits of the devil, is ever in great danger of being surprised; for, under the false garb of piety, the tempter says to him: "Thou who art guilty of so many sins, how wilt thou be able to make satisfaction for them without extraordinary penance?" Or if he be not conscious of serious faults, he will represent to him the excessive austerities and mortifications which the Fathers of the Desert have undergone. This inexperienced person is incapable of persuading himself that such thoughts, clothed with the appearance of good, could not but come from God. Thus he is under a serious misapprehension when he fails to have recourse to God, by fervent prayer accompanied with a humble fear; for, if he prayed, the Lord would hear him, and would Himself guide him when there is no one to whom he can apply for direction. He who lives under the rule of holy obedience, and is constantly instructed by a director, is free from all such illusions, even should the director himself be mistaken, by not observing the rules of prudence. God will in that case give him grace, by reason of his obedience, that all may turn to his profit. We might instance this by many authorities and examples.

This, then, is what may be observed with regard to sleep and watching. In summer, when the bell gives the signal for silence after dinner, it is well to repose awhile, for one is less disposed at that time to attend to the exercises of piety, and more inclined to watch at night, having rested at that hour. But, as a rule, on all occasions, when you go to rest, endeavour to have a

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psalm or some pious thought in your mind, which may be present to the imagination when sleep is broken. Be also careful to retire to bed at night in good time, since sitting up late interferes much with devotion and attention at the Office of Matins; being oppressed with sleep, we are unable to fix the mind on the Office, and sometimes even obliged to absent oneself therefrom.

Habituate yourself before going to rest to say some short prayers, to read some spiritual book or pious meditation. Among the meditations that you may make, I should prefer before all others those that relate to the Passion of our Lord, should devotion incline you thereto. Dwell especially on what Jesus suffered during those hours wherein you take your repose. Such is the advice of St. Bernard. It is needful, however, to follow in this the inspirations of God, for devotion is not the same in every one, but is stirred up in some persons by one thing, in others by something else. It is sufficient for some, in their simplicity, to dwell in the holes of the rock, which are the wounds of Christ, as the Scripture saith. But whatever be the superiority of mind with which they are endowed, they ought never to omit what will conduce to devotion; and while they read and study, they should from time to time address themselves to Jesus Christ, entertain themselves with Him, and ask of Him the light and intelligence of which they have need.

It will be well sometimes to put aside your book, to close your eyes in holy recollection, to hide yourself for a time in the wounds of Jesus Christ, and then resume

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the thread of your study. Be careful also, when you leave off study, to kneel down and say some short and fervent prayer. Do the same when you go from your cell to the church, into the cloisters, to the chapter-room, or into any other place. Follow in this the movements of God's Spirit; and with ejaculatory prayer invoke the Name of the Lord, pour out your soul in His presence, offer Him your desires, and implore the help of the saints on what you are about to do. This holy intercourse may be carried on at times without the aid of psalms or pronouncing a single word; at other times, by using certain versicles of the psalms, or passages from Scripture or the Fathers; God interiorly inspiring us at such moments with what we believe to be the work of our own thoughts and desires.

When this fervour of spirit, which ordinarily lasts but a short time, shall have passed away, you will the better remember what you have shortly before studied; and it is then that the Spirit of God will more clearly enlighten you. After this return again to study, and finally to prayer. Do these alternately, for by thus varying your exercises you will be more fervent during prayer, and your intelligence keener at study. But although this devotional fervour may indifferently occur at any time, according to the pleasure of Him who "disposeth all things sweetly," it will, nevertheless, be more ordinarily felt after Matins than at any other time. Hence sit not up at night, if this can be avoided, in order to be in a fitter state to apply yourself to prayer and study after Matins.

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When in the night you hear the clock strike, or any other signal given for Matins, shaking off all sloth, leave your bed with as much promptitude as you would if it were on fire. Then cast yourself on your knees, and offer up a short and fervent prayer; say at least an *Ave Maria*, or some other prayer calculated to stir up your spirit of fervour. You will not only rise with facility, but even with delight, if you repose on a hard bed and in your habit.

The servant of God should carefully avoid all softness and whatever conduces to bodily ease, without, however, exceeding the limits of discretion. Use, therefore, a straw mattress, and the harder it is, so much the more agreeable let it seem to you. Make use of one or two coverlets, according as the season or necessity may require; let straw serve you for a pillow, regardless of any inconvenience to the ears. Avoid placing the sheets close to your face or round the neck, unless it be in the summer nights on account of perspiration. Man has no need of all these precautions, which luxurious habits have introduced.

Sleep attired as in the day; put off your shoes and loosen the girdle. If you observe what I have said, so far from it being painful to rise, you will, on the contrary, do it with pleasure.

When the Office of the Blessed Virgin is of obligation,[1] remain at the door of your cell to say it, without

[1] It is a custom in the Order of St. Dominic for the religious to recite Matins and Lauds of the Blessed Virgin in the dormitory when this Office is a choral obligation.

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leaning upon anything, but standing erect on your feet. Then recite the Office with great attention, with a distinct voice, and with as much fervour as though the Blessed Virgin herself were visibly present. When the Office is finished, and you have nothing further to do in your cell, go to the church, or into the cloister, or to some place most favourable to devotion. It is not becoming a servant of God to be interiorly unoccupied when leaving or returning to his cell; but he should always revolve in his mind some psalm or pious thought. You may, nevertheless, enter the choir before the commencement of the Office and forecast what is to be said, in order to join in the chant more attentively and with greater devotion.

When the signal has been given for Matins, and the inclinations or prostrations, according to the time, have been made, stand erect, without reclining in any way, and sing the psalms; being thus in the presence of God, let your body do homage to Him as well as your soul. Sing His divine praise with joy, thinking of the presence of the angels, and of the obligation you are under of showing the utmost respect to them who continually behold the face of your heavenly Father, which you are only permitted to see in this life, as it were, "through a glass darkly." Spare not your voice in singing; yet let it be regulated with exact moderation. Omit no portion of the Office, neither psalms, versicles, words, syllables, notes, or anything which ought to be sung. If your voice be not so strong as that of others, sing in a low tone; but use, as often as possible, a

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Let not your feet rest upon each other, nor the legs be crossed or stretched out; but let your whole person breathe forth an air of modesty befitting the presence of God.

Guard against picking the nose; there are many who amuse themselves with this unseemly habit, who are led into it by the devil, in order to withdraw their attention from the Office, and so render them guilty of great indevotion.

There is an infinity of such like things, which it is impossible to particularise; but if you have humility and a perfect charity, the unction of the Holy Spirit will teach you how to comport yourself in everything.

And here I must caution the reader not to attach himself too much to the practices which I have set forth, and which may be varied in many ways according to circumstances, such as censuring another mode of acting, as for example, when some one speaks in choir, when a fault is committed which it becomes an older religious to correct. It should ever be borne in mind that it is unbecoming a servant of God to dispute in choir. It is, as I have said, a lesser evil to patiently allow a fault to pass unnoticed than to engage in disedifying contentions, which distract the attention and trouble the peace and tranquillity of the soul. In like manner, when I observe that it is fitting that we should always sing or recite the Office in choir, I do not conceal from myself the fact that there may be certain moments when the spirit of fervour is such, that the chant would have the effect of retarding it; in such cases it

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would be better to say one's Office quietly, especially in communities where the brethren are sufficiently numerous to sustain the chant. The same may be said with regard to many other things which the Most High will teach you better than I, if, having despised all things to cleave to Him, you consult Him in the depth and simplicity of your heart. But we ought not easily to apply to one's own individual case what is here spoken of with respect to departure from the usual customs of the community, unless, through a long practice of every virtue, we have acquired the spirit of discretion.

CHAPTER XI.

ON PREACHING.

USE simple and familiar words in preaching and exhortation, to explain in detail what you mean; and, as far as possible, illustrate what you say with some examples, in order that the sinner, finding his conscience guilty of the same sins which you reprehend, may feel as if you were speaking only to himself. Do this, however, in such a way, that your words, so to speak, may appear to come from the heart, without being mixed with any movement of indignation or pride, and to spring from the bowels of charity, from the tender love of a father, who is grieved at the faults of his children, who weeps when they are ill, and who is broken-hearted when they fall over some frightful precipice; of a father, I say, who strains every nerve to

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withdraw them from these perils, and even of a mother who uses every means for their preservation, who rejoices in their advancement, and in the hope that they will one day have part in the glory of eternity.

It is by this sort of preaching that you will render yourself serviceable to your hearers; whereas they will be little moved when you content yourself with merely speaking to them in general terms of vice and virtue.

Adopt the same means in the confessional, when it is needful to encourage timid souls, or to alarm those whose hearts are hard and unimpressionable. Let it be seen that you speak with the solicitude of a father, so that the penitent may feel in your words the breath of pure charity. It is, therefore, fitting that words of charity and sweetness should always take the place of sharp and reprehensive language. You, then, who desire to benefit others, begin by having recourse to God in the fulness of your heart; ask Him with simplicity to impart to you this divine charity which embodies in itself the other virtues, and which will enable you to accomplish what you desire.

CHAPTER XII.

REMEDIES AGAINST CERTAIN SPIRITUAL TEMPTATIONS.

I SHALL teach you, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the remedies against certain spiritual temptations which are very common in these times, and which God permits for the purpose of purifying and testing His elect. And although they

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do not appear to attack faith directly, yet they who carefully examine them cannot fail to see that they destroy the chief dogmas of religion, and set up the throne of Antichrist. I shall not explain what these temptations are, so as not to be an occasion of sin or scandal to any one; but I will show with what prudence you should act, in order not to be overcome by them.

These temptations, then, are of two kinds: the first is the suggestion of the devil, who causes man to fall and to estrange himself from God and the things that have reference to Him; the second is the corrupt teaching of certain persons, and the pernicious example of those who have already yielded to such temptations. I shall teach you how to comport yourself towards God and in all that relates to Him, that you may be secured against these temptations. I shall afterwards show you how you should act in regard to men, touching their doctrine and manner of life.

The first remedy against the spiritual temptations which the devil plants in the hearts of many persons in these unhappy times, is to have no desire to procure by prayer, meditation, or any other good work, what are called revelations, or spiritual experiences, beyond what happens in the ordinary course of things; such a desire of things which surpass the common order can have no other root or foundation but pride, presumption, a vain curiosity in what regards the things of God, and, in short, an exceedingly weak faith.[1] It is to punish

[1] Have not these words of St. Vincent a direct bearing on those who profess to hold intercourse with the souls of deceased persons

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this evil desire that God abandons the soul, and permits it to fall into the illusions and temptations of the devil, who seduces it, and represents to it false visions and delusive revelations. Here we have the source of most of the spiritual temptations that prevail at the present time; temptations which the spirit of evil roots in the souls of those who may be called the precursors of Antichrist, as we shall see by what follows.

Be thoroughly persuaded, then, that true revelations, and the extraordinary means by which God's secrets are known, are not the result of the desire of which we have spoken, nor of any diligence or effort on the part of the soul itself; but that they are solely the effects of the pure goodness of God communicating itself to a soul filled with humility, who respectfully seeks for Him and sighs after Him with all its strength.

Nor ought we even to exercise ourselves in acts of humility, and in the fear of God, with a view to being favoured with visions, revelations, and extraordinary sensations; for this would be to fall into the very sins to which such desires lead.

The second remedy is to dispossess the soul when at prayer, of consolation, small though it be, if perchance you perceive that it engenders in your heart sentiments of presumption or of self-esteem. This would insensibly lead you to abuse what is termed honour and reputation, and would induce you to believe that you merit to be honoured and applauded in this world, and

and with the angelic spirits? This is precisely one of the evils of the present day, even among those who pride themselves in being religious.

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to have a share in the glory of heaven. The soul that attaches itself to these false consolations falls into very dangerous errors; for God justly permits the devil to have power to augment in it these kinds of spiritual tastes, to repeat them frequently, and to inspire it with sentiments that are false, dangerous, and full of illusions, but which the misguided soul imagines to be true. Alas! how many souls have been seduced by these deceitful consolations?

The majority of raptures and ecstacies, or, to call them by their proper name, the frenzies of these forerunners of Antichrist spring from this cause. Hence, the only consolation you should admit into your soul in time of prayer, is that which is produced by the consciousness of your nothingness and misery; a consciousness which will preserve you in humility, and inspire you with profound reverence for the grandeur and majesty of God, and the desire that he may be honoured and glorified. Consolations such as these cannot mislead you.

The third remedy is to have a horror of every thought and sentiment, however elevated they may be, which gives indications of a desire to penetrate into the secrets of God when you perceive that they are capable of wounding any article of faith or morals, especially if they are contrary to humility and purity, for, doubtless, such can come only from the devil. Pay no attention, therefore, to visions that afford no certainty that they are from God, or that they lead you to what is pleasing to Him.

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The fourth remedy is not to attach yourself to any person, notwithstanding the apparent sanctity of his life, or the capabilities he possesses, when you have reason to doubt that his advice is not according to God, that it is not regulated by real prudence, that it is not in harmony with what the law of God prescribes, or with what is proposed to us for imitation in the life of Jesus Christ and His saints, or taught us by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers. Fear not to sin by pride or presumption when you despise such counsel, for such is due to zeal and to the love of truth.

The fifth remedy is to shun all intercourse and familiarity with those who sow broadcast, so to speak, the temptations of which I have spoken; with those who uphold or commend them. Neither listen to their words, nor be desirous to witness what they do; for the devil will avail himself of that curiosity to captivate you by the sublimity of their speech, and by their outward show of perfection, that you may thence be led to adopt their evil principles.

CHAPTER XIII.

REMEDIES AGAINST FALSE REVELATIONS.

I SHALL further instruct you in the remedies to be adopted in regard to those who propagate, by their lives and teaching, the temptations to which I have referred above.

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First, then, take little account of their visions, their extraordinary sensations, their ecstacies and raptures, and should they assert anything contrary to faith, Holy Scripture, and morals, despise their visions, look upon them as pure follies, and treat the ecstacies and raptures of such people as the results of a diseased imagination. If, however, their sentiments and language are in perfect accord with the dogmas of religion, with what we are taught in the sacred writings, and there is nothing in them that is offensive to morality, then we must not despise them, for this would be to despise the things of God; yet it will be well not to entirely rely on them, since it frequently happens, and especially in spiritual temptations, that falsehood is concealed under the appearance of what is good and virtuous. Often does the devil avail himself of these appearances in order to deceive, and diffuse more easily his fatal poison, when there is less reason to suspect him. I am of opinion that, on such occasions, it will be more pleasing to God not to pass judgment on these extraordinary matters, despite the appearance of truth with which they are clothed, and to leave them for what they are worth, unless they occur to persons whose probity, prudence, and humility, are so far beyond the reach of suspicion, that we have every reason to suppose that they can neither fall into illusion, nor be misled by the spirit of the devil. Even then, though we may approve of the visions and supernatural sentiments of such persons, it is not absolutely necessary to credit them on account of all these qualities which distinguish them, but only

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because of the conformity of these facts with Catholic faith, morals, the words, and teachings of the saints.

2. Let us suppose that you are interiorly led by some revelation or feeling, whatever it may be, to enter upon an important undertaking in which you have had no experience, and that you are uncertain as to whether or not it is pleasing to God; on the contrary, you have good reason for doubting it; in that case, take time to examine the act, weigh well all its circumstances; above all, see what its end is, in order to discover if it be agreeable to God. I do not, however, say that you may judge of it yourself; but apply to it, as far as is possible, the rules that are given to Christians in the Holy Scriptures, and in the lives of the saints whom you can imitate. I say, whom you can imitate; for, according to the opinion of St. Gregory, there are saints some of whose examples should not be imitated, although they were good in relation to them, and which we must regard with respect and veneration. But, if you are unable of yourself to discover whether or not the thing you desire is pleasing to God, consult persons of approved learning and piety, who cannot be doubted; their advice will enable you to discover the truth.

3. If you are exempt from the temptations to which I have alluded, either because you have never experienced them, or because, having been tempted, you have happily been delivered from them, be careful to raise your heart and soul to God, and not to attribute to your own strength, your wisdom, your merits, and the regularity of your life what you owe simply to the grace and

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pure goodness of God, to Whom you ought continually to render humble acts of thanksgiving. Do not imagine that you were delivered from these temptations by mere chance. According to the teaching of the saints, it is chiefly with a view to punish such thoughts that God withdraws His grace from man, and permits him to yield to the temptations of the devil, and to be miserably deceived by the spirit of lies.

4. Never be influenced by your own will to take in hand any important matter to which you are unaccustomed, while you are actually under these sort of temptations, which place you in doubt; but repress the desires of your heart, waiting with humility, fear, and respect, till God shall enlighten you by His divine light. For acts begun under such circumstances could hardly be expected to lead to any good result. I speak here only of such acts as are of importance, and out of the common run, which should never be undertaken while we are in a state of temptation and doubt.

5. If, on the other hand, you have begun some good work before being assailed by this temptation, let it not prevent you from fulfilling it; especially omit not prayer, confession, communion, the fasts and acts of humility which you are wont to perform, although you may find neither sweetness nor consolation in them.

6. When troubled with these temptations, raise up your heart and soul to God, humbly beseeching Him to turn them to His greater glory, and to your salvation, supporting the temptations as long as it shall please Him, and imploring Him to grant you grace never to offend Him.

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CHAPTER XIV.

MOTIVES TO EXCITE US TO PERFECTION.

VIEW with so much pleasure your happy commencement to do good, and your special desire to honour God, that I long not only for your perseverance, but also for your daily progress in the exercise of good works, or, at least, that you should desire it with your whole heart. I shall therefore put before you certain motives calculated to excite you to something more perfect than what you have already begun. Do not, however, imagine that you can accomplish this by your own strength.

1. Consider how God deserves to be loved and honoured on account of His goodness, wisdom, and His numberless other perfections. By this you will easily understand that what you conceived to be of importance in your efforts to serve Him, was, in truth, little or nothing compared with what ought to be done in regard to His divine perfections, and in order to be pleasing to Him. I lay this down as the first reason, because in all our acts we should have principally in view God's honour, His fear, and His love; He alone deserving of Himself to be loved by all His creatures.

2. Reflect on the contempt, the ignominy, the poverty, the sorrows, and the bitter Passion which our Lord was pleased to suffer out of love for you. If you love and honour Him in this light, you will easily perceive that

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all that you can do to testify your love and respect for Him is but little in comparison of what is due to Him. This is a higher and more perfect motive than the rest, although I have placed it second in order.

3. Consider the purity of life and the perfection to which the law of God, which is so perfect, obliges you, and how this law exacts, with an entire exemption from every vice and sin, the plenitude of virtue, included in the precept of loving God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength, and you will at once see your weakness, and how far you still are from the innocence and perfection that is required of you.

4. Call to mind the infinite multitude of God's benefits, the temporal and spiritual blessings which He dispenses to His creatures, and to you in particular, and you will soon be persuaded that all that you do, or all that you can do for God in the future, is nothing compared with the benefits and favours which He has bestowed on you with infinite liberality and goodness.

5. Endeavour to penetrate the magnificence of the reward and glory promised and in store for those who honour God by the holiness of their lives, and to understand that this glory will be measured by their justice and piety. You will thereby see that your own merits bear no proportion to so great a glory, and you will strive, with all your heart, that your works shall in future be more virtuous and perfect than they have hitherto been.

6. Consider how great and noble virtue is in itself, how it elevates the soul which it adorns; and, on the

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contrary, how vile and dishonourable vice is. This thought will lead you to make every effort to cultivate virtue, and to shun every occasion of vice.

7. Reflect on the sublime and perfect lives of the saints, and the number and excellence of the virtues which they practised, and you will feel the languor and imperfection of your own works.

8. Penetrate, if you can, the number and enormity of the sins you have committed against God, and you will acknowledge to yourself that all your works, however good in themselves, are little in comparison with the satisfaction that you owe to the justice of God.

9. Remember how you are surrounded on every side with danger and temptation, how the devil, the world, and the flesh seek to compass your destruction; and endeavour to resist them by practising virtue in its highest perfection, that you may be more safely guarded against these temptations.

10. Think of the severity of God's judgment, and of what is needful to prepare you to appear before Him: and you will be convinced that the acts of virtue and penance which you have performed up to this moment fall far short of what is due from you.

11. Meditate on the shortness of life: on death, which will surprise you at an hour when you least expect it; and think that, after death, you will no longer be in a condition to merit the pardon of your sins. Such a thought will surely incite you to practise virtue with greater fidelity, and will lead you to do more rigorous penance than you have hitherto done.

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12. Observe that to whatever holiness of life you have aspired, to whatever degree of virtue you have striven to rise, you have not entirely succeeded in avoiding pride and presumption, any more than negligence and sloth. Now, a person who finds himself in contact with these evils is in great danger of falling into spiritual sins, of which I could give numberless proofs, did time permit. I shall content myself with saying that, in order to be free from such evils, and to place yourself in a more sure position of defence against them, you should never dwell on the good you have already done, but should make every effort to attain the highest state of perfection. St. Bernard, explaining the psalm, *Qui Habitat*, and speaking of those who were fervent in the beginning of their spiritual career, but who, fancying themselves to be something, became faint-hearted and tepid, says to them, "Imagine that there is very little good in you, and that even this little would soon be lost, did not He Who gave it you preserve it by His grace."

13. Bear in mind the terrible judgments of God on those who, having for a long time persevered in great holiness and perfection, have at length shamefully fallen, through our Lord abandoning them because of some secret sin of which they did not imagine themselves to be guilty. This thought will doubtless serve to advance you in the path of virtue, and at whatever degree of perfection you may have arrived, it will induce you to aspire still higher, to purify your heart from sin, and to become more and more perfect, lest God, finding in you some hidden sin, should justly abandon you.

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14. Call frequently to mind the torments and pains of the damned, and those that are prepared for all sinners. This reflection will enable you to look upon the labours, the penances, the humiliations, the poverty of this life—in a word, all that you can endure for God, as light indeed. The fear and danger of falling into these torments will rouse you to greater efforts to avoid them, and to tend more and more to a more holy and perfect life.

CHAPTER XV.

ELUCIDATION AND APPLICATION OF THE MOTIVES PROPOSED IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTER.

HAVE merely touched on the motives which conduce to perfection rather than explained them, in order that you may be able to apply the mind to the little that I have said. Each of the above reasons should furnish you with ample food for meditation and reflection. To give practical effect to these motives, you should not content yourself with simply passing them over in the mind, but you should moreover strive to identify them with the affections of the heart, and the movements of the will. And to make them more clear, I will repeat in few words what I have already said, so that you may discover whether these motives produce any tangible results in your soul.

As to the first motive, it will act powerfully on the souls of those who are sensible of the grandeur, the per-

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fection, and the majesty of God, and who endeavour to love and honour Him as He deserves.

The second motive will touch those who have a keen appreciation of the charity and infinite bounty of Jesus Christ, of which He has given us striking proofs by suffering and dying for us; it will, moreover, excite in them an ardent desire to testify, by every means in their power, their thankfulness to Him.

The third motive will be of use to those who comprehend the extent of the perfection which God requires of His creatures, and who, to fulfil His commands, are animated with a lively desire to attain to this degree of perfection.

The fourth motive will influence those who are penetrated with the excellence of the benefits and graces which they have received from God, and who make every effort to serve Him with the fidelity which such favours exact.

The fifth motive will affect those who sigh after the glory of heaven: who comprehend, so to speak, the greatness of this glory, and who, with a lively faith and a firm hope, seek to possess it by every kind of meritorious act.

The sixth motive will be efficacious in regard to those whom sin inspires with horror, and who, on the contrary, have an intense love for the perfection of justice, and who truly appreciate the inestimable gift of God's grace.

The seventh motive will influence those who have a singular veneration for the acts of the saints, and are desirous to imitate them, especially those who are the

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most perfect, as the Blessed Virgin, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, the Holy Apostles, and other saints, whom it would be too long to mention by name.

The eighth motive will strike those who feel the burden of their sins, and who long with all their heart to satisfy God's justice by every sort of good work.

The ninth motive will produce its effects in the soul that is conscious of its infirmity, the burden that weighs it to the earth, the danger which it runs of falling into the temptations which beset it on every side. This fear will stimulate it to use the necessary precautions to preserve God's grace, and to shun the occasions of offending Him.

The tenth motive will impress the soul which, knowing its sins, is penetrated with the fear of the judgment that will be pronounced at the Last Day on impenitent sinners.

The eleventh motive will weigh with those who, fearing death, strive to prepare themselves for it by a life full of merit.

The twelfth motive will be useful to those who are persuaded that, notwithstanding the holiness of the life which they have entered upon, and their sincere desire to tend to perfection, it is scarce possible that pride and negligence should not, in some degree, be mixed up with it; that thus they cannot do too much to remedy these evils, and that, being placed in proximity to these two dangers, it behoves them to strain every nerve to avoid them.

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The thirteenth motive will act on those who, being careful of their salvation, fear above all things to lose the friendship of God.

The fourteenth motive will move those who meditate on the punishments which God will inflict on sinners in hell, who are conscious of how much they themselves merit them, and who, doing penance, strive to escape them.

Two things should follow from what we have said:—the one is to know our own imperfection, our misery, and nothingness; the other is to renew our endeavours to lead a more perfect life; so that the desire of perfection may never lose sight of our misery, nor the consciousness of our misery be separated from the desire of perfection.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW TO ESCAPE THE SNARES AND TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL.

HE who would escape the snares and temptations of the devil, particularly at the close of his life, should convince himself of two things. First, let him consider himself a corpse, full of worms, and a prey to corruption, a corpse from which those who approach it turn with disgust from the sight of so loathsome an object, and strive not to encounter the stench that exhales from it. It is thus, my dear brother, that you and I should always esteem ourselves; but I ought still more than you to be convinced of this, for I feel with truth that I am nothing but corruption of body and

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soul; that there is nothing in me but the stench of my sins and iniquity, which inspire horror; and what is still more trying, I feel, from day to day, this corruption renewed and increased within me.

The faithful soul should have this opinion of herself. It behoves her to humble herself in the presence of God, Who beholds all things, and to regard Him as a severe Judge, Who will demand of her an exact and rigorous account of her whole conduct. She will not then experience too great a sorrow for having offended Him, and for having lost the grace which He bestowed on her in baptism, wherein she was washed and purified in the very Blood of Jesus Christ.

It is not enough that the soul should acknowledge her corruption before God, and that she should herself be persuaded of it; it is besides requisite that she should be willing to afford this spectacle not only to the angels and saints, but to all mankind; and consequently ready to accept their contempt of her, their separation from her as from an offensive object, and her own exclusion from among them as one who is dead, with whom they have no wish to associate, who is no longer of their society, and who is to them something more loathsome than a leper; and this as long as it shall please God.

She ought, moreover, to be persuaded that men do her no wrong in this, but treat her as she deserves, even should they pluck out the eyes, cut off the hands, and inflict every species of evil on a body which has served to offend the God who created it.

The second thing is to desire to be humbled and

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despised, and to suffer not only with patience, but even with great joy, calumnies, injuries, ignominy—in a word, all that is most painful and humiliating.

It is, besides, necessary to have a great distrust of herself, of the virtuous acts she has performed, and of her whole past conduct; to turn herself wholly to Jesus Christ; to cast herself into the arms of this Divine Saviour, Who reduced Himself to extreme poverty, Who suffered every species of opprobrium, contempt, and humiliation, and a most cruel death for love of us.

Die, then, to every human sentiment and affection, that Jesus Christ crucified may live in you, and that being transformed and, as it were, transfigured, you may have no other feeling in your heart, you may no longer hear nor see any object but your Lord attached to the Cross, and dying for you, following in this the example of the Blessed Virgin; so that, being entirely dead to the world, your soul may breathe no other life than that of faith, thus, waiting that happy resurrection, when the Lord will fill you with spiritual joy and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; you, I say, and all mankind in whose conduct the fervour of the apostolic age should be renewed. Be attentive, then, to prayer, meditation, and pious affections, that you may obtain the gifts and graces of God.

Our dispositions towards God may be reduced to seven, which are: First, to love Him with an active and ardent love; second, to fear Him above all things; third, to render to Him the honour and respect which are due to Him; fourth, to have a persevering zeal in His

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service. Joined to these are, fifth, thanksgiving; sixth, a prompt and fervent obedience in all that He commands us, and in as far as we are able; seventh, a relish for heavenly things, saying to Him incessantly, "Lord Jesus, grant that by Thy grace my mind, my heart, and even the very marrow of my bones, may be penetrated with fear and respect for Thee; that I may burn with an ardent zeal for whatever concerns Thy glory; that this zeal, O my God, may inspire me with a lively horror for all the outrages that have been offered to Thee; and let this horror increase in me, seeing that I have been so unhappy as to insult Thee, or that others have done so on my account. Grant that I, Thy creature, may adore Thee with profound humility, as my God and Sovereign Lord. Let me be penetrated with gratitude for all the graces and numberless benefits which Thy mercy has bestowed upon me, and let me be unceasing in my thanksgiving to Thee. Vouchsafe that I may for ever praise and bless Thee with a heart overflowing with joy, and that, obedient to Thee in all things, I may one day taste of the infinite sweetness of Thy eternal banquet, in company with the Angels, the Apostles, and all Thy Saints, however unworthy I am of so great a favour by reason of my ingratitude."

Having shown you what ought to be your dispositions in regard to God, I shall point out seven others, which intimately concern yourself. The first is, to humble yourself at the sight of your faults and imperfections; second, to weep with bitter sorrow over the sins you have committed, and by which you have unhappily

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offended God, and defiled your soul; third, to long to be despised, humbled, and trodden under foot by all mankind, as the most miserable and corrupt of creatures; fourth, to subject your body to the most rigorous mortifications, and to desire to inflict on it still greater austerities, if possible, regarding it as sin itself, or, if I may use the expression, a sink or sepulchre which encloses within it every species of horror; fifth, to bear an irreconcilable hatred to sin, and the sources and evil inclinations from which it springs; sixth, to watch unceasingly over your senses, all your actions, and the powers of your soul, that you may be always disposed to virtue and good works, without ever losing this attention and vigilance; seventh, to observe in all things the rules of that perfect moderation which knows how to discriminate between excess and defect, too much and too little; to retrench what is superfluous without encroaching upon what is necessary, so that there may be nothing but what is in accordance with propriety and order.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS WHICH WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN REGARD TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

WE should strive to cultivate in ourselves seven other sentiments or dispositions towards our neighbour. The first is, by a compassionate generosity, to sympathise with him in his afflictions and misfortunes, as if they were our own. The second is,

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to rejoice in his prosperity as our own. The third is to calmly bear with his defects, to suffer patiently whatever is disagreeable in him, and to pardon readily the offences which he may have committed against us. The fourth is, to act with sweetness and affability towards all men, to wish well to them, and to show by our words and acts the sincerity of this desire. The fifth is, to prefer others to oneself, to have a humble and sincere regard for our brethren, and cheerfully to submit to them as our lords and masters. The sixth is, to live in peace and concord with all mankind, as far as we are able, and according to God, so that there may be, so to speak, but one feeling and one will among us. The seventh is, to be ready to lay down our life for the salvation of our brethren—to labour day and night, by prayer and good works, to make Jesus loved by men, and to render them worthy of being loved by Him.

From what has just been said, we must not conclude that we ought not to shun the company of disorderly people. Indeed, nothing can be more dangerous than to associate with them. Such intercourse could not fail to be an obstacle to our perfection, an occasion of at least retarding it, and of lessening the fervour of good works. We should fly from it as we would fly from contact with poisonous matter. For as a burning coal is never so hot but that it may be cooled and extinguished in water, so neither is it so indisposed to light as not to burn when cast into the midst of burning fuel. But when there is no question of danger, let us simply close our eyes to the defects of others, or, if we

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cannot altogether avoid seeing them, let us compassionately bear with them.

In order to afford you profitable advice in regard to things temporal or eternal, four dispositions are requisite.

The first is, to consider yourself a stranger on the earth, so that whatever you possess therein may appear to you to belong to others rather than to yourself, that you may feel no more attachment to them than you would to the possessions of a person who lives far from you.

The second is, to regard a superabundance of things for your own use as hurtful to you as the subtlest poison, and to view it with as much alarm as you would a rocky sea on which it is difficult to escape being shipwrecked.

The third is, to accustom yourself, in the use of things that are necessary, always to feel the effects of poverty and want, poverty being the mysterious ladder by which we safely ascend to heaven, to be possessed of eternal wealth.

The fourth is, to shun the pomp of the rich and powerful ones of the earth, without, however, disdaining them, and to let it be your glory to associate with the poor, your joy to remember them, to see and converse with them, however denuded of everything, neglected, and despised they may be, since, by these very circumstances they are the living expression of Jesus Christ; they are kings, whose society should be to you a special honour and a subject of great joy.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE PERFECTION WHICH IS NECESSARY TO HIM WHO SERVES GOD IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

HERE are fifteen degrees of perfection which are indispensable to him who desires to serve God in the spiritual life.

The first is a clear and perfect knowledge of our faults and weaknesses.

The second consists in courageously doing battle with our evil inclinations, and all that can incite in us feelings contrary to reason; in a word, every unruly passion.

The third is a great fear for the sins we have committed against God, since we know not whether we have fully atoned for them by penance, nor whether we are truly reconciled to God.

The fourth is a constant dread of our frailty, lest we fall into the same disorders or even greater.

The fifth is to subject all our bodily senses to an exact and rigorous discipline, in order that the body may be submissive to the soul in all that relates to the service of Jesus Christ.

The sixth is great fortitude, and an invincible patience in temptation and adversity.

The seventh consists in courageously shunning the society of persons, and whatever else may be to us an occasion, not only of sin, but even of imperfection or want of resolution in the spiritual life.

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The eighth is to bear in oneself the Cross of Jesus Christ, on which I recognise four arms : the first is mortification of the passions ; the second is renouncement of all temporal goods ; the third is no longer to love one's relatives with the affection of mere flesh and blood ; and the fourth is to despise oneself, to abhor and humble oneself as much as possible.

The ninth is to preserve a constant remembrance of all the benefits that we have received from God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, from the moment that we came into the world.

The tenth is to pass the day and night in prayer.

The eleventh is to continually experience the holy delights which are found in God.

The twelfth is to burn with an ardent desire for the exaltation of our holy faith ; that is, to desire that Jesus Christ may be known, loved, and honoured by all mankind.

The thirteenth is to feel for the necessities of our neighbours with all that goodness and mercy which we should wish others to have in our regard.

The fourteenth is to render perpetual thanks to God with our whole heart, to glorify Him in all things, and to praise for ever our Lord Jesus Christ.

The fifteenth is that, having done all that is here prescribed, we should esteem it little, indeed, and say to Jesus Christ : " Lord, my God, I am nothing, I am capable of myself of nothing but evil ; I have never served Thee as I ought, and I confess that I am but an unprofitable servant " (Luke xvii. 10).

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CHAPTER XIX.

INSTRUCTIONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

EVANGELICAL poverty is of a threefold character: first, it consists in an effectual and sincere renouncement of whatever legitimately belongs to us; second, an exact and rigorous temperance in the use of temporal goods; third, an habitual practice of all that poverty exacts of us.

There are three things which specially belong to abstinence: the first is to weaken and debilitate, if I may use the word, the desires of the flesh, and what the Scripture calls the solicitudes for the necessaries of life; second, not to trouble oneself about an abundance or sufficiency of food, much less about what is pleasant and agreeable to the taste; third, to use with great discretion whatever is served to us.

It behoves us chiefly to avoid and to dread three things: first, the exterior distractions which are inseparable from business; second, the desire to be advanced to some higher post, and every feeling of pride; third, an inordinate affection for temporal benefits, and every sentiment which is below the dignity of our calling.

There are also three things to which we should particularly accustom ourselves: the first is to despise ourselves, and to desire that others should humble us and think little of us; second, to have a tender compassion towards Jesus Christ crucified; third to be in a

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disposition to suffer every species of persecution and even martyrdom for the Name of Jesus Christ and His Holy Gospel. These are things to be meditated on every moment of the day, and to be made the object of our unceasing supplication to God.

There are, moreover, three other subjects on which we should love to dwell: first, Jesus Christ crucified, and all His other divine mysteries; second, the lives of the Apostles, and those of the saints who belong to our own Order, and who should be the special object of our imitation; third, the life required of those who are destined to preach the Gospel, the virtues which become them, their poverty, simplicity, humility, sweetness, the charity which should bind them together, considering that they ought to see nothing, speak of nothing, desire nothing but Jesus Christ only, and Him crucified; that they should have a contempt for the things of earth, a forgetfulness of themselves; that they should fix their eyes on the majesty of God and the glory of the blessed, sighing from the depth of their hearts after this glory, aspiring daily after death, and saying with St. Paul: I desire to be delivered from the bonds of this body, that I may be with Jesus Christ; I long to have part in the inexhaustible treasures of heaven, to be plunged in that ineffable source of eternal delights, and to be satiated with their infinite sweetness. We should represent to ourselves the blessed singing with indescribable joy the canticle of the angels, and offering their hearts to God as instruments consecrated to His glory. Nothing can more effectually produce this ardent

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desire in us than this representation. It will illumine our minds, allay all our doubts, and dissipate the clouds of ignorance. Carry always, then, in the midst of your heart, this God crucified, that He may one day admit you to a participation of His eternal glory. Amen.

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SECTION THE SECOND.

Devout Practices taught by St. Vincent Ferrer.

I.—Daily Rule of Life.

IN his sermons the Saint frequently recommends to his hearers a rule of life, which every Christian ought to practise in the morning as soon as he rises, and at night when he retires to rest. He suggested to them to make the sign of the Cross on their foreheads, to devoutly kneel down morning and evening, and to recite those prayers which are commonly in use, such as the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Angelical Salutation*, and the *Apostles' Creed*. The Christian, he observed, who daily practises this short and easy exercise is sure to pass a happy day. He moreover earnestly exhorted them to recite after the Creed, a prayer to obtain a happy death. The Saint accustomed himself to this prayer daily, and he repeated it at the moment of his death. It is to be found in the Roman edition of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, according to the rite of the Friar Preachers.

In order the better to comprehend the value and importance of this daily exercise, it will be well to quote

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with the sign of the Cross, then purify his heart by making an act of true and sincere contrition, and afterwards say the first *Our Father*. Passing to the second Divine perfection, he should meditate on the wisdom and knowledge of God, by which He sees and knows all things without anything being concealed from Him. After this consideration he should repeat the second *Our Father*. He must consider in like manner the great goodness of God, who created all things through His love for man, although He had no need of either heaven or earth, or of any creature whatsoever. He shall then recite the third *Our Father*. Coming thence to consider the fourth Divine excellence, which is the creation of all things in nature, the visible, such as ourselves and all corporeal beings, and the invisible, which are the angels, the Saint explained how each were adorned with inexplicable beauties and transcendent virtues. And having said an *Our Father*, he commenced to meditate on the great vigilance with which God governs the world, and His providence, which supplies life and raiment to all, remedies in time of sickness, which sends tribulation to humble our pride, and prosperity to console us. The Saint then recited the fifth *Our Father*. These first five meditations over, he contemplated in like manner the other Divine perfections, and said an *Our Father* after each of them. Following the Saint's advice, we should meditate on redemption, by which the same God became man, and was pleased to be crucified on the wood of the Cross, in order to deliver His children from hell. We may also

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reflect on the glorification of the elect in heaven, where they will live for ever happy, both in body and soul. It is, moreover, fitting that we think of the condemnation of the reprobate, who will be justly punished for their crimes in the eternal fire of hell. Nor should we forget the condition of the souls of the just detained in purgatory, who, passing out of this life in friendship with God, have, nevertheless, to expiate certain faults in those purifying flames. Last of all, we ought seriously to reflect on the last terrible Judgment, in which the just and the unjust will be arraigned before God, to receive the recompense or punishment which will be awarded to their works.

The Saint terminated this exercise, saying that it was enough for us to know that St. Bartholomew was accustomed to make one hundred genuflections throughout the course of the day, and as many at night, in order to stimulate us to perform the same act at least ten times in the morning, and again at night, since the works of the saints are proposed for our imitation. St. Vincent added that the reward attached to his practice of prayer is to obtain the Divine mercy; for St. Augustine, commenting on these words of David: "Blessed be God, Who, in His mercy to me, hath not rejected my prayer," explains that he would say, "Separate not thyself from prayer, and God's mercy will not forsake thee."

Among the numerous daily exercises which St. Vincent recommended in his sermons, we have selected these two only, with a view to give an example of what the holy apostle was wont to inculcate. Besides, he

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never intended to oblige any one to observe precisely this or that practice, without being at liberty to apply himself to others. But he taught in a general way that whoever was desirous to lead a truly Christian life ought, according to his condition, capacity, and strength, to choose a certain number of prayers, to fix on certain fasts, and fervently to persevere therein.[1]

III.—Ejaculatory Prayers of St. Vincent Ferrer.

ENKINDLE, O my God, in the midst of my heart the fire of Thy love!

I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be for ever in my mouth (Psalm xxxiii. 1).

Withdraw from me whatever impedes my approach to Thee. Behold, I know not what to say nor what to do, unless Thou, my God, help me!

Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew vi. 10).

Grant, O my Jesus, that I never offend Thee!

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; for my soul trusteth in Thee (Psalm lvi. 2).

[1] St. Vincent does not here propose the Rosary, for the simple reason that in his time the whole Rosary was said without interruption, and because he was desirous of affording ordinary Christians a short and easy exercise. At the present day, as the Church authorises the division of the Rosary into three parts, and even into as many separate decades as there are mysteries, it is easy to fulfil the Saint's object by reciting one decade of the Chaplet morning and evening, and accompanying it with meditation on one of the five mysteries of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin.

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O Jesus! I desire to do only Thy holy Will.

Wipe out, O Holy Spirit, the stains of my soul!

Blessed Virgin, obtain the grace for me always to remember you!

Through Thy sacred Passion and Death, O Lord, blot out mine iniquities!

O Holy Trinity, One and True God, have mercy on me!

O Jesus Saviour! O Jesus, preserve my heart!

Pity, pity, Lord; mercy, O my God! pardon, oh, pardon, my Jesus!

When shall I leave this miserable body that I may enjoy the unhidden sight of my God, my love!

Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within my bowels (Psalm l. 12).

Remember not my offences, O my Saviour!

Thou art the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John xiv. 6).

Virgin and Mother, Mother and Virgin, Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray for me to your Divine Son Jesus.

IV.—A Devotion recommended by St. Vincent to obtain a Happy Death.

THE Saint, preaching in Catalonia, taught a most pious practice of prayer to implore of God the grace to die holily. This practice was faithfully recorded by the notary-public, in order to perpetuate its memory to posterity. It consists in reciting

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certain verses of the Psalms, with a prayer which follows at the end.

Prayer to obtain a Happy Death.

Have mercy on me, O God, and hear my prayer (Psalm iv. 2).

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled (Psalm vi. 3).

Have mercy on me, O Lord; behold my humiliation which I suffer from my enemies (Psalm ix. 14).

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted; my eye is troubled with wrath, my soul, and my belly (Psalm xxx. 10).

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy (Psalm l. 3).

Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me under foot: all the day long he hath afflicted me, fighting against me (Psalm lv. 2).

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; for my soul trusteth in Thee (Psalm lvi. 2).

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I have cried to Thee all the day. Give joy to the soul of Thy servant, for to Thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul (Psalm lxxxv. 3, 4).

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us; for we are greatly filled with contempt (Psalm cxxii. 3).

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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Let us Pray.

O Lord Jesus, who desirest not that any one should perish, and Who art never invoked without the hope of mercy, for Thou hast declared with Thy sacred and blessed lips, "All whatsoever you shall ask in My Name shall be given to you;" I beseech Thee, O Lord, for Thy Name's sake, to grant me at the hour of my death the full use of my senses and of speech, a lively contrition for my sins, a true faith, a firmly established hope, and a perfect charity, that I may be able to say to Thee with a pure heart: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O God of Truth, Who art blessed for ever." Amen.

This pious practice is most efficacious for obtaining the grace of a happy death, for we observe that in each of the above verses the holy king David constantly invokes the Divine mercy by the words, *Have mercy.* It seems, moreover, that the Saint's intention was that these prayers should be recited by each one as though he were already in his agony, oppressed with the anguish of death, moved by the fear of sins committed against the Divine justice, and assailed by the most violent temptations of despair suggested by the devil at that terrible moment. To prepare oneself thus for death is to desire to die holily, for we may reasonably hope for a holy death after so holy a preparation.

In order not to lead simple-minded people into error on this subject, it is necessary to guard them against two things: the first is, that in asking of God, through

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this holy practice, the grace to die well, they should not content themselves merely with imploring this great favour, but they should, moreover, strive to live as becomes Christians, because, ordinarily speaking, a good death is the consequence of a good life; the second is, to persevere to the end. To die in God's grace is a gift of His liberality which we do not of ourselves merit; but we can by our prayers obtain it of the Divine mercy, and to gain this great gift St. Vincent recommends the above prayers, in which the mercy of God, which is the supreme and special cause of a happy death, is many times invoked.

V.—A Protestation according to the spirit of St. Vincent to secure a Happy Death.

THIS day, for the last moment of my life, adore Thee, O my God, One in Essence and Three in Persons, Omnipotent God, full of wisdom, infinitely good and holy, supreme and infallible Truth, my Creator and my Lord, my only good: I desire to die in Thy service.

First, I believe all that Thy Divine Majesty has revealed, and all that our holy Mother, the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, has declared; and I offer my blood, my life, and my very death, to protest and confess the holy Catholic Faith.

Second, acknowledging myself, without Thy grace, destitute of every good, I confide in the bounty and merits of Jesus Christ, and in the intercession of the

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Immaculate Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints. I hope for eternal life, and the means necessary to attain it, and I declare that I desire to live and die in this hope.

Third, I am, it is true, a most vile creature; but because Thou hast commanded me, and because Thou art infinitely amiable, I love Thee, O my God, above all created things, and I desire that Thou shouldst be loved, praised, and honoured by all creatures. I wish, also, that all my sighs and my last breath should be an irrevocable protestation of my pure and sincere love towards Thee.

Fourth, I detest with my whole heart my sins, because they have displeased Thee, and I prefer to suffer a thousand deaths and every imaginable pain, rather than offend Thee, my dear Saviour!

Fifth, I most humbly thank Thee for all the benefits which I have received through Thy mercy and infinite bounty.

Sixth, I offer myself to endure voluntarily all the anguish and sufferings of life, infirmities, and death, in satisfaction for my sins, in union with the sorrowful martyrdom of Jesus agonising, and of my Sovereign and Mother Mary standing and afflicted at the foot of the Cross.

Seventh, I ask pardon of all from the depth of my heart for my many bad examples, for the pain that I have caused them, for the injuries that I have done them; and with all the sincerity of my heart I pardon those who have offended me, that Thou, my Lord, mayst deign to grant me the pardon of all my sins.

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Eighth, I humbly supplicate my relations, friends, and acquaintances, to remember my poor soul in their prayers, that it may be speedily delivered from the pains of purgatory, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ and the prayers of the Church, should the infinite mercy of my God render me worthy of it.

Lastly, acknowledging what I am, a creature destitute of every good, and burdened with a multitude of sins, I desire before dying to be worthy to receive the Sacrament of Penance, the Holy Eucharist, and Extreme Unction. But lest by accident I should be prevented from receiving them at the moment of my death, I ask for them with all the fervour possible, repenting of all my sins, solely because they have offended Thy Divine Majesty. I unite myself spiritually to Thee, my Sovereign Good, with the affections of an ardent charity; vouchsafe that the oil of Thy mercy may fortify all the powers of my soul and body against the attacks of the infernal enemy.

And the more effectually to ratify these my promises, I sign this protestation, and will carry it always about me, that all may know my last and irrevocable will.

I declare in truth and sincerity all that I have said above, and it is in these dispositions that I wish to live and die.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I this day give you my heart and my soul, throughout life and at my death. Amen.

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VI.—Devout Prayers, according to the spirit of St. Vincent, to be Preserved from Sudden Death.

First Prayer.

MERCIFUL Jesus, I beseech Thee by Thy tears, Thy agony, Thy bloody sweat and death, to deliver me at all times from a sudden and unprovided death.

Second Prayer.

Most amiable Jesus, I humbly implore Thee by Thy ignominious Scourging, Thy Crowning with Thorns, Thy Holy Cross, Thy Sacred Passion, and by all Thy Goodness, not to permit me to pass out of this world without having received Thy most holy Sacraments.

Third Prayer.

O most amiable Jesus, my Lord and my God, I entreat of Thee from the depth of my heart, I implore Thee with my whole soul, by all Thy weariness and sorrow, by Thy Precious Blood, Thy Sacred Wounds, by those last words which Thou, my sweet Jesus, didst utter: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—I beseech Thee also by that cry: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit,"—yes, I implore Thee thus not to snatch me out of the world by a sudden death. Grant me, I pray Thee, time to do penance. Vouchsafe that I may happily die in Thy grace, in order that I may love Thee with my whole soul and with all my heart, and that I may praise Thee and bless Thee for ever.

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Last Prayer.

My Lord Jesus! by the Five Wounds which Thou didst receive on the Cross for love of us, help Thy servants, redeemed by Thy most Precious Blood.

VII.—A Devotion for the Feast of our Lord's Nativity, taught by St. Vincent.

ST. VINCENT FERRER, preaching on one occasion on the eve of Christmas, proposed to the people the example of a merchant of Valencia, who each year, to honour the birth of our Lord, invited to his table a poor old man, an indigent woman, and a little child, in whom he was pleased to contemplate the most holy Virgin, with her Divine Child Jesus, and St. Joseph, His adopted father. "This pious practice," said the Saint, "was so pleasing to God, that the merchant, being at the point of death, beheld the holy Virgin, with her Child, and the patriarch St. Joseph, appearing to him; and these Divine personages told him that, as he had received them into his house, they had come likewise to invite him into their dwelling, the kingdom of heaven, thus confirming the gospel saying, 'What you do to one of My brethren you do unto Me.'" The Saint further remarked, "What you spend on pleasure, bestow, for the love of God, on the poor, after the example of the merchant of Valencia. The poor, who are unable to give alms, may recite as many *Ave Marias* as there are days, weeks, or months during which the

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Blessed Virgin bore the Holy Child Jesus in her virginal breast."

This advice of the Saint embodies in it two sublime devotions: one for the rich, who may receive three persons on Christmas-day, an old man, a woman, and a child, treating them with great charity, and inviting them to dine in their house, in memory of Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph. The other is for the poor, who, having nothing to bestow on the needy, may salute the Virgin Mary Mother of God in the manner prescribed, in order that the Divine clemency of the Word Incarnate may communicate to them, through the merits of His most Holy Mother, the grace and mercy of God.

VIII.—Prayers which St. Vincent Ferrer made use of to Restore Health to the Sick, and to perform other miracles.

THE prayers which St. Vincent was accustomed to use before working miracles consisted of certain words drawn from the holy Gospel, in order to excite faith, or else other prayers, such as the following:—

Signa autem eos qui crediderint hæc sequentur: super ægros manus imponent, et bene habebunt. Jesus, Mariæ filius, mundi Salus et Dominus, qui te traxit ad fidem catholicam, te in ea conservet, et beatum faciat, et ab hac infirmitate liberare dignetur. Amen.

These signs shall follow them that believe: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. May Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Saviour of the world, Who hath brought thee to the Catholic faith, preserve thee therein, and make thee blessed, and vouchsafe to deliver thee from this infirmity. Amen.

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This prayer was afterwards brought into use by St. Lewis Bertrand, who drew it up in the form in which it is used by the Holy Order of Friar Preachers to bless the sick, after the example of these two saints. It runs thus :—

Super ægros manus imponent, et bene habebunt. Jesus, Mariæ filius, mundi Salus et Dominus, qui te traxit ad fidem catholicam, te in ea conservet, et beatum faciat, et meritis Beatæ Mariæ, et Beati Dominici, Patris nostri, et Beati Vincenti et omnium Sanctorum, te ab hac infirmitate liberare dignetur. Amen.

They shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. May Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Saviour and Master of the world, Who hath brought thee to the Catholic faith, preserve thee therein, and make thee blessed; and may He, by the merits of Blessed Mary, and of Blessed Dominic, our Father, and of Blessed Vincent and all the Saints, vouchsafe to deliver thee from this infirmity. Amen.

The number of sick persons, and especially those who were afflicted with fever, who recovered their health by means of this short prayer, is known only to God. It is not necessary to speak of them; for daily experience sufficiently proves its efficacy. Our object here is, not to speak of the Saint's miracles, but only to reveal the pious practices taught by him, and of which he himself made use.

Besides the prayer which he recited over the sick, he used another almost similar to it to restore the dead to life. It is as follows :—

Signa autem eos qui crediderint hæc sequentur : Jesus, Mariæ filius, mundi Salus et Dominus, qui hujus animam ex nihilo fecit, eam in hoc corpus restituat, ad laudem et gloriam Sui Nominis.

These signs shall follow them that believe : May Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Saviour and Master of the world, Who formed the soul of this person out of nothing, restore it to his body, for the glory and praise of His Name.

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Sometimes, in particular cases, or to perform some striking miracle, the Saint made some slight alteration in the above prayers, as was the case when he restored to life the little child which was killed by its mother. On that occasion he added certain words to the prayer we have been speaking of.

The prayer which he recited over persons possessed was as follows:—

Signa autem eos qui crediderint hæc sequentur: In Nomine Meo dæmonia ejicient. Jesus, Mariæ filius, mundi Salus et Dominus, qui te traxit ad fidem catholicam, te in ea conservet, et beatum faciat, et corpus tuum a dæmone liberare dignetur. Amen.

These signs shall follow them that believe: "In My Name they shall cast out devils." May Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Saviour and Master of the world, Who hath brought thee to the Catholic faith, preserve thee therein, and make thee blessed, and vouchsafe to deliver thy body from the devil. Amen.

In this way did St. Vincent excite faith and devotion in himself and in those who were desirous of miracles, rendering glory to God, and effecting the salvation of his neighbour. He left to posterity the formula of these prayers to obtain the health of the sick.

IX.—Practices of Devotion taught by St. Vincent to obtain the Blessing of Fecundity.

HEN persons whose marriages were unblessed with offspring had recourse to St. Vincent to obtain through him this blessing, the Saint would receive them with much kindness, and knowing the right and legitimate desire which they had to behold

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their union fruitfully blessed, he animated them to confidence in the Divine power, which would console them by bestowing on them the blessing which they desired. Not only did he bless them and pray God to comfort them, but he moreover wished them to unite with him in prayer. He taught them how to pray in order to obtain that grace, and instructed them, in the first place, to live in the holy fear of God, and carefully to keep the marriage vow. He likewise enjoined them to recite morning and evening the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the Apostles' Creed; not to pass a single day without saying the holy Rosary, and before taking their meals, to bless themselves with the sign of the Cross and with Holy Water. The Saint also recommended them to say the Psalm, *Beati omnes qui timent Dominum;* he counselled those who could not read to engage some one to recite it devoutly for them, and to listen to it attentively. He, then, assured them of the speedy realisation of the desired favour, provided it should be necessary to the salvation of their souls.

According to the testimony of grave writers, a great number of women obtained this singular favour, by means of this short and easy devotion. Father de Valdecebro attests that in his time the pious Countess of Oropeso being fourteen years without children, and having abandoned all hope of having an heir, had recourse to the Saint's intercession, recited and did all that he enjoined to obtain the joy of maternity. She had the happiness of being heard, and brought into the world the fruit of the blessing for which she had so ardently longed. The

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same Father adds that the number of miracles wrought by St. Vincent Ferrer to obtain heirs to noble families, is almost as great as that of the cures which he performed in favour of the sick. We also can affirm that even in our own day the intercession of St. Vincent is so efficacious in obtaining similar graces, that he merits to be styled the Patron Saint of the unprolific.

X.—Remedies, or Practices of Devotion, against Tempests, taught by St. Vincent.

THE holy Apostle preaching at Chinchilla, a country that was frequently devastated by storms, left to the people of that coast and to others also, some spiritual practices and prayers to be used against tempests, telling them that these were of two kinds, namely: one which proceeded solely from the earth, for example, the insects and worms which eat and destroy the plants. Against this evil the Saint recommended, as the most effectual remedy, the use of Holy Water, according to the formula of the Church; sprinkling the ground with it, and invoking the Holy Name of Jesus. And as the plague is a scourge of the same nature, he observed that the same remedy might be used against it, and that a pious ecclesiastic should be invited to go through the streets and houses, to asperse them and to recite the prayers prescribed by the Church, especially the following:

Ut quidquid in domibus, vel in locis fidelium hæc unda resperserit, careat omni immunditia, liberetur a noxa; non illic resideat spiritus pestilens, nec aura corrumpens.

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The other kind of tempest, added the Saint, proceeds from the atmosphere, namely, hail, thunder, the winds, heavy rains, and such like things. To remedy these, he suggested the recital of the Psalm *Deus in adjutorium meum intende*, the Litany of the Saints, the Athanasian Creed *Quicumque vult salvus esse*, and finally the Apostles' Creed. He recommended also the prayer, *Jesus, Mariæ filius*, etc., mentioned above, changing certain words according to need:

Jesus, Mariæ filius, mundi Salus et Dominus, qui nos traxit ad fidem catholicam, nos in ea conservet, et beatos faciat, et ab hac tempestate liberare dignetur.

Lastly, the Saint observed that before reciting these prayers, each one should fortify himself with the salutary sign of the Cross, conformably to the practice of the holy Roman Church. "They," said he, "who are Priests, should, before invoking the Divine aid, make the sign of the Cross against the clouds;" but he enjoined the laity to simply invoke many times the Holy Name of Jesus, each time making the sign of the Cross upon themselves. He, moreover, counselled the laity, and with reason, to make the sign of the Cross upon themselves, and not upon the clouds, as the ritual prescribes, since he could not teach them to do what alone belongs to priests.

We should bear in mind that, after having performed all these prayers against storms and other calamities, should the evil still continue, we must not lose confidence in God, Who knows how, and is able, by other means, to provide for our wants and to succour us in our necessities.

St. Vincent Ferrer, speaking of the prayers that are

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offered up in times of drought to procure rain, such as the Litany of the Saints chanted in the public processions, warns us, in asking for a cessation of the calamity, against imitating rude and ignorant people, who declare and hold for certain that in default of rain they will lose their harvest; this is a want of confidence in God, Who can produce the grain and the wheat not only in the fields, but even in the very granaries, and in abundance. "God," said he, "often will not hear prayers because of the little confidence that is placed in Him." In proof of this, the Saint related that at Valencia, the wheat being greatly in want of rain, public processions took place, and the saints were invoked through their litanies, without, however, the great drought ceasing. Nevertheless, though the grain remained small, by reason of the want of moisture, the crops were so abundant, that no one in Valencia ever remembered to have seen so rich a harvest. The ears were full of grain, and there was exceedingly little straw.

XI.—Other Prayers against Tempests.

HEN robbers and enemies ravage and pillage the possessions of a people, the latter have recourse to the Prince to aid and succour them; "even so," observed St. Vincent, "when the devils, who are our enemies, seek to tempt us, by inciting storms to rob us of the produce and to destroy the shrubs and vines, we should have recourse to God, and implore His

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Divine help. Also when we see the dark clouds gather and hear the thunder groan, it is customary to ring the bells and to expose the Cross; Christians prostrate themselves before God, and address their supplications to Him. These practices are most fitting. The Church bells are trumpets whose sound frightens our enemies, and each one should prostrate himself before the Cross in prayer.

These prayers should be performed in four ways: The first is the recital of the litanies, or we may invoke the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Blessed Virgin, and all the Saints. This prayer belongs specially to clerics, since many of the laity do not know the litanies. The second is to recite the Creed *Quicumque vult salvus esse*, etc., signing ourselves with the sign of the Cross, to drive away the tempest. It is beyond question that by reciting these prayers on bended knee, and praying with true devotion, the noxious clouds are dissipated or disappear, by going into some desert place where they can neither hurt people, nor the crops, and the heavens become clear and serene.

The third consists in saying the *Creed*, which all should have by heart, and at each article should form on themselves the sign of the Cross against the tempest. The fourth and last method which every one may adopt, is to kneel down at the commencement of the storm, and make the sign of the Cross, invoking three times the most sweet Name of Jesus, and by this means driving away the devils and the storms.

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XII.—Devotion to the Guardian Angels.

ST. VINCENT took special care to inculcate to the people devotion to the Guardian Angels. He said that we should strive by means of prayer to make them our friends. He recommended them to say on their knees, morning and evening, the following prayer in their honour:

Angele Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum pietate supernâ, illumina, custodi, rege et guberna. Amen.

O Angel of God, whom God hath appointed to be my guardian, enlighten and protect me, direct and govern me. Amen.*

Its meaning is, as the Saint explains in one of his sermons: "Enlighten me with the holy light of the Christian faith; protect me against the evil inclinations of my nature, the snares of the devil, the attractions of the world, and the impure delights of the flesh; direct and govern me in the practice of good works."

In order to engage each one to venerate his Guardian Angel, the Saint explained in the pulpit the great benefits that we receive from them, since they are our defence against our enemies. "It is they," added he, "who comfort us in our troubles and temptations, who support us lest we fall. And if unhappily, refusing to hear their voice, we fall into grievous faults, they excite us to a true and sincere repentance. It is they who enlighten

[1] This prayer, as it would appear, is very ancient. Was it St. Vincent who composed it, or was it anterior to him? We are unable to decide this question. The Church has attached precious Indulgences to this practice: one hundred days each time, and a Plenary Indulgence once a month. Pius VI., Pius VII., 15th May, 1821.

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our understanding to know the things of faith; it is they who, as our advocates, pray incessantly for us, and rejoice with exceeding great joy in heaven with the other blessed spirits each time that we do penance. In a word, it is they who will conduct us to glory, when we shall have finished our earthly course."

But what especially encouraged people to devotion to the Guardian Angels, was to hear from the Saint's lips that these spirits fulfil this office towards us with such joy and delight, that, when they receive from God the command to help us, they regard this as a special favour, and thank God with a most lively gratitude. And that the faithful might thoroughly realise this benefit, the Saint showed them the example of a master, who, having sheep in the desert, sends shepherds to guard them, that they may not be devoured by wolves. "God," said he, "acts towards us in like manner. We are His flock in the desert of this world, and He sends His angels to watch over us, that we may not be devoured by the infernal wolves, agreeably to what is written: '*Angelis suis mandavit de te;*' 'He hath given His angels charge over thee'" (Psalm xc. 11).

XIII.—The Blessing of Food.

MONG the practices of piety which St. Vincent taught the faithful, he recommended to them the blessing of food before meals, and grace afterwards. In a sermon preached on the Fourth Sunday in

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Lent, he related to his hearers a terrible chastisement which God inflicted on a man who was in the habit of taking his meals without asking the Lord to bless his food. The Saint affirmed that he had seen in Lombardy a man who was possessed by five hundred devils, of whom he demanded the reason why they had entered that man's body. "It is," they answered with an awful voice, "because we have been commanded by God to punish him for having eaten and drunk without ever saying a prayer, or even making the sign of the Cross." In his sermons, the Saint never prescribed any prayer to be said before and after meals; but contented himself with exhorting them to this duty: to invoke God, and to say some prayers of praise to thank Him for His benefits, leaving to each one the choice of prayers which he should recite. "You ought always," said he, "before and after meals, to give thanks to God for the gifts that He has bestowed upon you, by pronouncing at least the Name of Jesus."

The blessing which he taught the people consisted of verses of the Psalm cxliv.

Oculi omnium in te sperant, Domine, et tu das illis escam in tempore opportuno. Aperis manum tuam, et imples omne animal benedictione. Gloria Patri. Kyrie eleison. Pater noster.

The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord: and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature. Glory be to the Father. Lord have mercy on us. Our Father.

And the thanksgiving afterwards, are those other words of David:

Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum misericors et miserator Dominus: escam dedit timentibus se. Gloria Patri. Kyrie eleison. Pater noster.

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He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: He hath given food to them that fear Him. Glory be to the Father. Lord have mercy on us. Our Father.'

He proposed to them the example of our Lord, Who was wont to act thus with His disciples. "And on that account," he observed in conclusion, "we should inviolably observe this custom."

XIV.—The Manner of Sanctifying the Fast of Lent.

AMONG the practices of devotion which this great Saint was accustomed to teach, was that of sanctifying the fast of Lent, in order that Christians might not only fulfil the precept of holy Church, but, still more, that they might attain their sanctification through it. He observed that we should all, at that holy time, imagine ourselves to be out of the world, and in the society of Jesus in the desert, according to the condition of each one.

First, he said, in regard to religious and priests, that they should live in the desert with Jesus, by applying themselves more than ever to the recital of the divine Offices. As to artisans, he exhorted them to leave their homes from time to time, to assist at the holy Mass and the sermon, in order to hear the divine word; after which they might apply themselves to their occupations for the support of their families.

The Saint requested the rich to rise at daybreak,

' Every pious Christian knows the *Benedicite* and the grace after meals. It is an excellent custom to add the *Our Father* to these.

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and to address fervent prayers to God. They were to assist at the solemn Mass and sermons; after which they should recite the Psalter, so that in this manner the morning might be occupied till mid-day. To those who could not read, he prescribed the visit of the churches, monasteries, and hospitals, that they might gain the Indulgences attached to these works. He permitted a short recreation after the repast; but obliged them thence to assist at the divine Offices, or at the recitation of the seven Penitential Psalms. "In this way," said he, "every one can be in the desert, far away from worldly amusement, in order to acquire merit for heaven, and to be freed from the rebellion and evil inclinations of the flesh, as well as from all the disorders of the age."

At other times, the Saint would compare the time of Lent to Mount Thabor, a high, desert, austere place, in opposition to the time of carnival, which resembles the low and delightful valleys. "In the latter time, which is a season of folly," he observed, "many walk in the broad path of perdition, but during the holy time of Lent, devout Christians ought to climb the mountain of penance, leaving behind them luxuries, pleasures, pomps, and worldly display, in imitation of the Prophet Isaias: 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,' that is, let us go to the mountain of penance (Isaias ii. 3). On that mountain Jesus Christ is transfigured, and, though He be a rigorous Judge, yet He will appear full of mercy towards us by reason of our penance. Therefore it is that the

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Royal Prophet expresses himself thus: 'Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion; for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come'" (Psalm ci. 14).

XV.—Rules prescribed by St. Vincent for Living Piously.

THE Saint was wont to give to the simple people four rules, to enable them to live piously. The first was, every day to perform attentively the morning exercise of which we have already spoken; then having said the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Creed*, and the *Salve Regina*, they should make the sign of the Cross, and for the sake of brevity, make the following protestation: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I declare my desire to live and die in the holy Catholic faith."

The second rule was to hear Mass on Sundays, and Feasts of Obligation; and at Mass to offer loving acts of thanksgiving to God for having created us, redeemed and preserved us to this day.

The third rule was to confess every month; for although the Church obliges her children to this act only once in the year, "yet, for the good of the soul, it is most useful," said the Saint, "to do it once a month."

The fourth rule was to receive Communion with the requisite dispositions. But, in order to receive worthily the Eucharist, he laid down four other rules: first, to make an entire confession of our sins before approaching

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the holy table; secondly, to renew our sorrow for past sins, to detest them, and to make acts of contrition for them; thirdly, to form a resolution never to separate oneself from God by a single mortal sin; and, fourthly, to determine to make satisfaction by true penance for the sins of our past life.

XVI.—Pious Reflections composed by St. Vincent, and used during the time of Discipline, to excite Sinners to Repentance; drawn from the Process of his Canonisation.

ET us reflect tenderly and with deep attention on the sufferings of Jesus in His Passion, how He was abandoned by the Apostles, and seized and bound by the wicked Jews, that we might all be delivered from the bonds of our sins. Will there be one of us who will hesitate to scourge himself severely with the discipline when he thinks of Jesus so delicate, but so cruelly maltreated for us?

"O holy Virgin, how were you loaded with blessings in your conception, you who attracted this envoy of heaven, who delivers us from the terrible punishments and from the bonds of eternal damnation!"

By this simple and pious reflection the holy apostle sought to imprint sweetly on the hearts of people a tender compassion towards Jesus crucified, "a compassion," said he, "which we should continually have in our soul; for, if we reflect on the contempt and the outrages, the poverty, the sorrows, the sufferings

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endured with so much bitterness by the Son of God for love of us, that He might thereby incite us to love and honour Him, we shall understand how little we have done to love and honour our Lord, compared with what we ought to do."

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PART THE THIRD.

PRACTICAL DEVOTION OF ST. VINCENT FERRER.

SECTION THE FIRST.

FRIDAYS DEDICATED IN HONOUR OF ST. VINCENT FERRER.

TO THE PIOUS READER.

THERE is nothing in my opinion that is better calculated to move a soul devoted to St. Vincent Ferrer, than the fifteen degrees of perfection taught by the Saint himself in his "Treatise on the Spiritual Life." Be not alarmed, dear reader, at the sound of this word perfection; for if it were so difficult as we picture it to ourselves, our Lord Jesus Christ would never have recommended it to the multitude when he said, "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48). The practice of it is, doubtless, somewhat difficult, I do not deny; but virtue is so transcendent a good, that to acquire it, it behoves us to surmount every difficulty that surrounds it. Moreover, if you seek to attain it by

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the royal ladder erected by the Saint, you will find this exercise so sweet, that your soul will appear to ascend to heaven by a path planted with roses.

The Saint, your advocate, has acted in this as a tender mother acts in regard to her little child, who, in order to accustom it to eat bread, cuts it into morsels for it: to afford the bread of perfection, this food so strong to the weak and to those young in virtue, he has divided into fifteen degrees what is here proposed to you on these Fridays. It is, then, a most useful exercise for acquiring conjointly with the protection of so great a Saint, perfection itself.

The following is the order to be adopted. Firstly, you should read a short lecture on each of the succeeding perfections, taken word for word from the eighteenth chapter of the Saint's "Treatise on the Spiritual Life." For the benefit of simple people, the text is accompanied by a short, but solid explanation. Secondly, a prayer is offered to the Saint, to obtain through his intercession the degree of perfection which he teaches you. And lastly, in order to animate yourself to place your confidence in him, you should read a short instruction on some of the miracles wrought by him. The exercise is then concluded with devout prayer, namely, seven *Our Fathers* and seven *Hail Marys*, or the Litanies of the Saint.

At all seasons of the year, the Fridays may be kept in honour of St. Vincent, according to the spiritual and temporal needs of each one. But they who have a special devotion to this Saint, are accustomed to cele-

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brate also the seven Fridays before and after his Feast. They should visit, if possible, every Friday the chapel, or some statue of the Saint; it will be well also to fast on the same day, if this can be done; or, when this is impracticable, some pious work may take its place, in accordance with the advice of one's confessor.

Confession and Communion are enjoined on the same day, in order to gain the Indulgences granted by the great Pontiff Benedict XIII., and renewed by Pius VII.[1] We should, moreover, devote half an hour to mental prayer, either at one time, or by dividing it into a quarter of an hour morning and evening. We should meditate on the explanations and practices of the perfections of the spiritual life, proposed by the Saint. And lastly, we should recite seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, and seven *Glory be to the Fathers* in honour of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost with which St. Vincent was so abundantly enriched. We should add, as far as we are able, prayers to the Saint, or his Litanies which are appended to this work.

Besides the exercise of the seven Fridays before and after the Saint's Feast, I shall propose another both short and profitable: on every Friday which is observed in his honour, choose one of the virtues practised by him, and excite it in you; for example: charity, humility, meekness, obedience, modesty, chastity,

[1] A Plenary Indulgence on Fridays at each one's choice; seven years and seven forty days' Indulgence on other days. The same may be also gained on the seven Fridays after the Saint's Feast. Pius VII. *ad augendum* 16th of February, 1808.

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patience, resignation, &c.; and this not in a light and passing way, but in such a way as to excite yourself to practise effectually the same virtue; exercise yourself, for instance, in patience until you possess it, and by degrees you will acquire each of the other virtues. In this consists true devotion to the Saint: the imitation of his virtues.

First Friday before the Feast of St. Vincent.

Text.—Nine perfections are necessary to him who would serve our Lord Jesus Christ in the spiritual life. The first is to have a clear and perfect knowledge of his shortcomings and defects.

Explanation.—This, says St. Vincent, is the first step to be taken by a soul that wishes to walk in the path of perfection: it behoves him to know himself. The knowledge of oneself is the foundation of humility, which produces the fear of God. To know and to weep over one's own miseries is the principle of salvation. St. Jerome assures us of this (chap. xv.).

Practice.—The means for acquiring this knowledge consists in a frequent examination of our conscience, in willingly receiving fraternal correction, and even desiring to be told of our faults; in never thinking of the defects of others, but in watching over ourselves, as the Apostle exhorts us: "Take heed to thyself," etc. (1 Tim. iv. 16).

Prayer to the Saint.—O great Saint, my soul is in dreadful agony! If I view my interior, I am unable to support myself; and yet, if I reflect not on myself, I

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cannot possibly know myself! When I consider what I am, I am terrified; and instead of correcting myself, I almost despair, seeing that I am burdened with so many sins and defects! But if I neglect to examine my interior, I might perchance imagine myself to be in the path of salvation, and go blindfolded into hell! What shall I do? I will have recourse to you, my protector, glorious apostle of the fifteenth century, great St. Vincent. When on earth, you ardently sought after sinners, that you might inspire them with true repentance by the knowledge of their iniquities, and then, with unspeakable kindness and joy, you received them into your heart. Behold me, great Saint, prostrate at your feet; I confess my misery and the gravity of my offences, but I do not see them as clearly as I could wish. Obtain for me, I beseech you, one ray of heavenly light, by which I may truly know myself as I am. Let this light comfort me with the hope of pardon, let it animate me to correct my faults, and amid the assaults of my passions, let me remain stedfast in the path of virtue. You have obtained this grace for thousands of sinners whom you delivered out of the darkness of sin, converted to God, and led to perfection. Can I hope for as much? Oh! yes, I do hope for it, because I know how powerful your intercession is. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—Among the innumerable prodigies wrought by the Saint at Valencia and elsewhere, the cure of afflicted eyes, and the restoration of sight to many blind people, are particularly noticed. To interest you, I shall relate one such fact. Listen to what hap-

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pened to a merchant who had lost his sight. This man, named Seuchier, who lived in the borough of Bram, in the department of the Aude, hearing that St. Vincent Ferrer was at Montolieu, immediately caused himself to be conducted thither that he might receive from him the cure of his infirmity. The amiable Saint went to meet the merchant on the steps of the Benedictine Abbey, where he had chosen to lodge; and when this person was apprised of the Saint's presence, he cast himself on the ground before him, saying: "Master, since you are, as I believe, a true disciple of Jesus Christ, I pray you to restore to me my sight which I have lost for the space of three years." St. Vincent making on his eyes the sign of the Cross, completely cured him, and the merchant suddenly recovered his sight.[1]

Recognise here yourself the great goodness of the Saint, who runs to meet those who come to him to obtain favours. Observe his promptitude in satisfying the wants of his neighbour, for hardly has the blind man asked him for his sight than he immediately bestows it on him. How happy are you in having chosen as your advocate a Saint so good and so prompt to succour those who invoke him! If he shows such great liberality towards one who is deprived of his bodily sight, how much more will not he exercise it in regard to your soul, alas! afflicted with spiritual blindness!

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer of the Saint, *Quisque*, or the Litanies at the end of the book.

[1] Ranzano, *apud Bolland.*, et alii ex processu canonizationis.

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SECOND FRIDAY BEFORE THE SAINT'S FEAST.

Text.—The second perfection is a generous and constant resistance to evil inclinations and desires contrary to justice.

Explanation.—Many persons place the difference which separates the servants of God from those who do not serve Him, in the absence of evil inclinations. In this they are mistaken; for to serve God, does not consist in never being tempted, but in never consenting to evil tendencies and to corrupt passions. Thus, the holy man Job defines the life of man to be a constant warfare. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1). "God," says the Dominican Cardinal Hugo of Saint-Cher, "has placed us here below, in order that, combating our evil inclinations, we may gain an immortal crown."

Practice.—Do not excuse yourself by saying: "I have an evil nature." God has given you this nature that you may subdue it, and thus acquire a great recompense in heaven. Neither accuse your passions of being the cause of your falls; but rather blame yourself, who neither know how nor desire to curb them. When your passions are excited, remember that you are bound to overcome them if you wish to attain perfection, for it is written: "He also that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. ii. 5).

Prayer to the Saint.—Great Saint, you who have shown so rare a fidelity to grace, by repressing within you the evil instincts which we have all inherited from

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our first father, I beseech you not to suffer my soul to flatter its cowardice or to sanction the difficulties of virtue that it may live in forgetfulness of its duties, in a shameful connivance with the senses, in an unworthy bondage of the passions. I am kneaded with corruption. A fatal experience only convinces me more and more of this: "I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me" (Psalm l. 7). There is within me the man of spirit, when I am virtuous; but there is also the man of flesh; and the latter is powerful, bold, tyrannical; he insolently rebels against the other; he strives for the mastery, he desires to rule over him, to stifle him. Great Saint, assist me in the ardent struggle that is going on. What shall I do, what will become of me if you abandon me? With God, be you my strength, I beseech you. Then shall I exclaim with the Apostle: "Of myself I can do nothing, but I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me;" I can do all things in God, I can do all things in Vincent, His servant. With the help of God, with the help of Vincent, my beloved protector, I will boldly encounter the interior enemies of my salvation, I will resist their murmurings, their rebellions, their unreasonable demands, their assaults; I will make myself master over them, and like you, O glorious Saint, I shall merit the eulogy of the victorious. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—From his youth, St. Vincent Ferrer frequently spent the night in prayer. Meditating on one occasion before the altar of the most holy Virgin, the tempter appeared to him in the guise of an

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ancient Father of the Desert, having a beard which reached to his girdle. Approaching the Saint, he said, "Brother Vincent, I am come from heaven, to visit thee, on account of the affection and compassion that I feel towards thee, that I may give thee some advice that will be useful to lead thee in the path of heaven without wearying thyself in the course of the journey. I am one of the celebrated anchorites who peopled the solitudes of Egypt. In my youth I led a dissolute life, and yielded myself up to the pleasures of sense. Afterwards, fearing to be surprised by a sudden death, I resolved to change my life, and retired into the desert, where, already satisfied with the enjoyments of the world, and aided by God's grace, I entered on the life of an anchorite. I obtained pardon of my sins, and buried myself in that retreat, where I occupied myself only in pleasing God. If, then, thou wishest to attain the summit of perfection, and to end thy life in a holy manner, follow the advice that I am about to give thee. Do not afflict thy body in the flower of age, nor practise such great mortifications. No one can live without sooner or later yielding to the demands of his passions, and it is better to do it in youth than at a more advanced age. When we reach the period when it is fitting that we should fear death, then, by fervent prayer and sincere repentance, we can easily obtain the pardon of the carnal pleasures that we have tasted of in youth, and gain heaven, there to enjoy its pure delights in the company of the angels and of so many other penitent saints."

Hardly had the angel of darkness, transformed into

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an angel of light, delivered himself of these last words, than he believed that he saw St. Vincent Ferrer tempted against the constancy and perseverance in the enterprise of mortification through which he had resolved to preserve his baptismal innocence until death. But the valiant soldier of Jesus Christ, arming himself with the sign of the Cross, and pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary, exclaimed, "I have consecrated to God my youth and my old age, because I wish to give Him my whole life." Then the devil, seeing himself discovered and vanquished, fled in confusion, howling frightfully, and leaving behind him a fetid and insupportable stench.[1]

In imitation of the Saint, let us courageously repel the perfidious insinuations by means of which Satan would prevent us from shaking off the yoke of concupiscence to embrace the law of the spirit.

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies of the Saint.

Third Friday before the Saint's Feast.

Text.—The third perfection is a constant fear of the sins which we have committed against God—sins in regard to which we are unable to know if we have made satisfaction, and whether or not God has pardoned us.

Explanation.—There are many persons who, having confessed their sins, think no more of them than if

[1] Ranzano, and other biographers of the Saint. Teoli. lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 14.

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they had never committed them, and who do no penance for them. Such persons have a pressing need to acquire the third degree of perfection taught by St. Vincent. Thus, after having confessed his sins, and having striven to amend his life, he who would be perfect, and have an assurance of pardon, should have, moreover, a fear of past sins, and never cease to weep over them with a compunction that pierces his heart. He is certain of having offended God, but he is uncertain whether or not he has obtained pardon. "Blessed is the man that is always fearful," saith the Holy Spirit (Prov. xxviii. 14).

Practice.—The way to exercise oneself in this holy fear of God is, to make frequent acts of contrition, and to have recourse to our holy intercessors, that they may appease the just anger of God. Besides, he who really trembles for the sins of his past life, who acknowledges that he has offended God by forbidden pleasures, should abstain even from those that are allowable, in order to satisfy for his past faults. It is St. Gregory who teaches us this (lib. ix. ep. 39).

Prayer to the Saint.—Having offended God as I have had the misfortune to do, it is but just, O holy protector, that I forget not the evil of which I am guilty, and that I should humble myself unceasingly before God, as you have taught me. O you, who by your words of eloquence inspired sinners who heard you with sentiments of contrition so lively and so perfect, continue, in my behalf, this ministry, so efficacious. Vouchsafe that I may ever have in view the terrible

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judgments of God, that the memory of my past iniquities may never be effaced from my mind. Like the penitents whom you converted, grant that I may be able to say with them, as with the repentant prophet, "My sin is always before me; it is ever present to my sight. Day and night I deplore it; I abhor it; I detest it; I implore pardon of God for it." Yes, sweet St. Vincent, may this be the cry of my soul, the abiding sentiment of my heart. May I exclaim, without ceasing, "Mercy, my God, mercy! We have acted unjustly towards Thee; we have committed iniquity; we are ungrateful; our prevarications are without excuse" (Psalm cv.). Yes, sweet refuge of penitent souls, receive these words which the memory of your life inspires me with, so holy in comparison with my own, which is so despicable. Avert the justice of God, that being interiorly changed, I may be able to repeat confidently, all the days of my life, this consoling assurance of King David, "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm l. 19). Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—When St. Vincent Ferrer was in France, there was at Béziers a man who had committed many grievous crimes, and, still worse, he almost despaired of the Divine mercy. The Saint, having gone to preach in the town where this unhappy man dwelt, the latter went to hear him, and he was so thoroughly penetrated with the unction of his words, that he, completely humbled and contrite, cast himself at his feet to accuse himself of his sins. Indeed, he confessed with such lively contrition, that St. Vincent, having

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imposed on him a penance of seven years, he exclaimed, "What, my Father! so light a penance for such grievous sins!" "Yes, my son," replied the Saint, "I will even lessen it. Your penance shall not be a fast of seven years, but only of three days on bread and water." The sorrow of this true penitent increased on hearing the Saint diminish thus a penance which appeared to him already too easy, and he answered, "But, Father, is it possible that for such grave offences you can impose so light a satisfaction on me?" At these words, St. Vincent answered with a holy resolution, "Go, my son; I will not impose on you any other penance than this: the recital of the *Our Father* three times." The penitent, sincere and submissive, humbly inclined his head, and began to recite his three *Our Fathers*. But his sorrow was so great, his contrition so perfect, that, without being able to finish his penance, he fell dead at the feet of his holy confessor. On the following night the glorious soul of this penitent appeared to St. Vincent. "By the great mercy of God," said he, "and by reason of my perfect contrition, the Lord granted me His complete forgiveness, and I have entered paradise without passing through the flames of purgatory."[1]

In another place, a woman who led a scandalous life went to the church to hear the holy preacher. But as she had gone there through other motives than the desire of hearing the Divine word, she sought out a conspicuous place, in order to be better seen by her admirers. The man of God ascended the pulpit, and commenced

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 4.

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to preach against the vain ornaments of women and against sins of the senses. He forcibly exhorted his hearers to despise them as so many offences that were most grievous in the sight of God. O admirable power of the Divine word! the Saint's exhortation penetrated the heart of the unhappy woman to such a degree, that the contrition with which she was seized caused her to shed an abundance of tears of repentance; her sorrow, indeed, was so great, that she was suffocated by it, and fell dead upon the ground in the sight of the assembled multitude. All they who were present were the witnesses of her sorrow and her tears, yet they trembled for the salvation of her soul. Seeing her die thus suddenly, they regarded her death as a chastisement of God, and deplored her ruin which would be eternal. But the holy orator promptly consoled them. "My good people," said he, "fear not for the salvation of this woman, for her perfect contrition has saved her. Pray for her." At these words, the preacher was interrupted by a voice that came from heaven, which said: "There is no need to pray for her, for she is already in heaven." Thus was the fact confirmed which the Saint had announced, that perfect contrition had saved this woman, and that she was already wearing the crown of glory among the souls of true penitents who people heaven. May these beautiful examples animate you to conceive for your sins a lively hatred and a sincere repentance.[1]

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 4.

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FOURTH FRIDAY BEFORE THE SAINT'S FEAST.

Text.—The fourth perfection is a constant fear lest our frailty should occasion us fresh falls similar to the past ones, and perhaps greater.

Explanation.—In this degree the Saint shows us that the nearer a soul approaches perfection, the more ought she to dread new falls. Thus she will do well to root herself in a holy and filial fear of God. This fear is as a rock which will preserve the soul from future sins; for if she leaves it, she will inevitably expose herself to irreparable disasters, according to what we read in the book of Ecclesiasticus: "If thou remainest not in the constant fear of God, thy edifice shall speedily fall." These words have reference to the edifice of perfection, which each one must endeavour to build up.

Practice.—The most efficacious means for preserving oneself in the filial fear of God, is to avoid small faults and venial sins. These things offend God. He who contemns small faults, infallibly falls into great ones. "They who fear God," says the Wise Man, "neglect nothing, but take account of everything" (Eccles. vii.).

Prayer to the Saint.—Alas! on whichever side I turn, I find myself beset with danger. If I reflect on my past life, then I seem to behold hell ready to engulph me in its flames. If I consider my present life, I immediately see myself in the world as in an abyss of vice. Had not I an angel who tempers this great fire, like him who quenched with a refreshing breeze the flames of the furnace of Babylon into which the three children were

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show you that he is most faithful and prompt in coming to the aid of souls who invoke him.

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

Fifth Friday before the Saint's Feast.

Text.—The fifth perfection consists in keeping all the senses under an exact and rigorous discipline, in order that they may be submissive to the soul in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Explanation.—The fifth degree is truly necessary. Listen to St. Ambrose: "Jacob, being on a journey and wishing to rest himself, laid his head upon a hard stone." Thus, says the great doctor, they who are in the path of perfection should resolve to lead a rigorous sort of life, that is, to deprive themselves of whatever is delicate; to choose a hard couch, coarse food, and such like things. This is an important rule of spiritual strategy to which the soul should subject herself from the moment that she enters on the rock of the holy fear of God, to follow her Head and Guide, Jesus, Who was crowned with thorns. "Under a head pierced with thorns, it is not fitting that the members should be delicate," says St. Bernard (Serm. v.).

Practice.—Call to mind the sort of life that St. Vincent led when yet a child. He fasted twice a week without ever failing, on Wednesday and Friday, and always on bread and water. He gave, with his parents' permission, all that he was able to the poor, and particularly to

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religious. He had great devotion to our Lord's Passion, for he recited daily the Office of the Holy Cross; and every time that he met with the sign of our Redemption on his journey, he saluted it with great piety. He had an equal affection for the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom he had recourse in all his needs. Copy, as far as you are able, the example which the Saint, your advocate, affords you, and in imitation of him, lead a pious and mortified life, which will conduct you to the perfection which you desire to attain.

Prayer to the Saint.—Make me feel, O St. Vincent, that my cruelest enemy is myself; let this conviction be deeply imprinted in my soul, which should animate every Christian with the necessity of mortifying his body. Oh, how truly did you say, with the Apostle St. Paul, "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27). Alas! I am far from this beautiful model. You see before you a miserable sinner, plunged in flesh and blood: a sensual soul, who dreads the least restraint: who flies from penance: who ardently runs after unworthy pleasures. In following my perverse inclinations, can I reckon on my salvation? No, I cannot. Is not the wisdom of the flesh death? (Rom. viii. 6.) Is it not the enemy of God? (Rom. vii.) Can flesh and blood possess the kingdom of God? (1 Cor. xv. 50.) Is it not, on the contrary, the characteristic of a Christian to crucify his flesh (Gal. v. 24), to repress its desires? (Rom. viii.) To you, then, my beloved Patron, St. Vincent, I have

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recourse; through you I ask for this Spirit of God, which is opposed to the spirit of the flesh. You possessed it so abundantly yourself; let one salutary ray of it fall upon me. I have confidence, O great Saint, that by your powerful intercession my instincts will be changed. Leaning on your merits, I desire for the future to destroy what I have worshipped, and to worship what I have destroyed. Obtain for me, I beseech you, the realisation of this desire, which I present to the Lord through your hands. "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels" (Psalm l. 12).

Spiritual Instruction.—Great is the devil's craft in leading us to believe that it is impossible for us to walk in the footsteps of the saints. He discourages us; he places our weakness before our eyes, and it appears to us so truly great, that we imagine we can accomplish none of the things which so many others have done before us. But if we attentively consider the conduct of the glorious St. Vincent, who always observed a rigorous life, even in the midst of the greatest labours, what shall we think of our tepidity and cowardice in practising mortification, which the Saint practised to so high a degree.

He was of noble blood; consequently he was of a less robust constitution than many other men. And yet hardly had he become a religious, when he fasted almost every day of his life. He was constantly travelling. He accomplished his journeys on foot, with a staff in his hand, or on an ass when his age or infirmities obliged

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him to use it. He would never eat meat, nor did he omit the discipline which he was accustomed to take every night, after having preached twice or three times in the course of the day. Here is a most striking miracle apropos of his abstinence.

The Saint was one day received into the house of a certain burgess, who left orders with his wife to prepare dinner for the Saint in the forenoon. He recommended her, among other things, to serve him with fish only. The wife was subject to periodical fits of madness. It so happened that she was seized with one on this very day, and suffered so cruelly, that she killed her little child, who was of a tender age, cut it in pieces, and prepared out of it a horrible dish, with the intention of setting it before the Saint.

The husband returned home as soon as the preaching was over, and asked if dinner was ready. His wife answered, "Yes;" and added, "I have prepared for the holy Father Vincent an exquisite dish, with the best and most delicate meat." "But," answered the burgess, "did not I not tell you that Father Vincent never eats meat?" "It is true," said the wife; "but I wished to mix the flesh of our little child with the fish. I have therefore killed it and cut it into pieces, that Father Vincent may see that we give him the best we have." Saying this, she showed her husband the bloody preparations for the feast which she had raved about.

We can easily conceive how deeply grieved the poor father was at the sight of this horrible accident; he would have died of grief, had not the Saint arrived at the house at

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that moment, and consoled him in a marvellous manner. In effect, seeing the innocent child killed and treated in the way described, St. Vincent was moved with compassion. He then, without loss of time, collected together the fragments of this little body; then he united them together with his own hands, and having said a short prayer, accompanied with the sign of the Cross on the child, he restored it to life. It was thus that he returned it, sound and well, to its father, who received it, as we may well suppose, with unutterable consolation.[1]

After so striking a miracle, we can comprehend, dear reader, how acceptable to God are the penances and mortifications which we practise with a view to subdue our mortal flesh. Consider how pleased God is to honour the abstinence of the Saint, since He wrought so wondrous a prodigy. Continue to supplicate your advocate to obtain for you the strength to be able, by the mortifications and holy rigours of penance, to attain perfection. He is so powerful, he will obtain it of God.

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys* and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

Sixth Friday before the Saint's Feast.

Text.—The sixth perfection is great strength, and an invincible patience in temptation and adversity.

[1] This prodigy, related by Ranzano (vide *Bolland.* April, Tom. I. p. 502), is one of the eight hundred and sixty that were alleged for the canonisation of the Saint. Mention is made of it in the Antiphon of Lauds, of the Office of St. Vincent Ferrer, in the Dominican Liturgy.

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Explanation.—The Saint expresses himself thus: "However regular a person may be in his conduct, he nevertheless will not be without struggles, temptations, and adversity." Thus it is that he strongly recommends to you the sixth degree. It consists in the strength with which a soul should be endowed in her struggles with temptation, according to the advice of the Wise Man: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccles. ii. 1). But strength is not sufficient, if it be not united to patience, by which we overcome the adversities and persecutions which usually happen to those who aspire to perfection, according as St. Paul observes: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iv. 12).

Practice.—If you desire to attain to this degree, have recourse to God whenever you are tempted, saying, with the woman of Canaan: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David" (Matt. xv. 22); and He will grant it to him who well knows his weakness, and who implores His divine assistance. The most effectual means for exercising yourself in patience is to call to mind in your afflictions and troubles that you merit much more on account of your sins; and in persecutions to think that the saints were persecuted in the world, and that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. These considerations will comfort you, and instead of being dejected because the world hates you, you will rejoice, because this will be a sign that you are not of the world, but of God, as our Lord Himself declared to His Apostles (John xv. 19.)

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Prayer to the Saint.—Invincible hero of the Church, St. Vincent, you who from the tenderest age were resolved to lead a rigorous life, and who addicted yourself to constant prayer, fasts, and penances, to acquire the perfection to which you so happily attained; you who vigorously repelled the assaults of the world and of the flesh, and who endured with indescribable patience every kind of persecution, behold me prostrate at your altar, deploring my misspent life. The ruin of my soul is great, because I have lived without regulating my conduct; or, if I have sometimes made resolutions, the least breath of temptation or contrariety sufficed to make me lose courage, and to abandon all. I this day resolve to serve with my whole heart till death the God whom you served so faithfully; and the rule that I purpose to follow is, to imitate, as far as my duties permit, your most holy life, by combating, after your example, the devil, the world, and the flesh. But how shall I effect my purpose, unless you give me the shield of your patience? Obtain for me, most glorious Saint, these two virtues so necessary to conduct the enterprise of perfection to a happy issue: the path beaten only by strong and persevering souls, who suffer with patience and resistance to the end. O great Saint, deign, then, to teach me this degree of perfection; obtain for me also those arms of strength and patience with which to do battle, that in the end I may receive, like you, the crown of eternal glory. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—Among the conversions wrought by St. Vincent Ferrer, the most remarkable were those of

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women of abandoned character, inhabiting the public inns, and who, after having ministered to the destruction of souls, became true models of the most sincere repentance. This general conversion greatly displeased the debauchees who acted as their panders. They were enraged against the Saint, who, by this change, the fruit of his zeal, deprived them of a considerable income from this infamous trade. In Spain they one day resolved to take the life of the Saint, saying that he had robbed them of their bread. As he was leaving Lerida to go to Balaguer, these unhappy men lay in ambush, in order to assail him on the way. St. Vincent, apprised of their criminal design, said to the companions of his journey, "They who come before us are the panders of the women of abandoned life who are converted, and they are coming to me with a firm resolution of killing me." The companions of the man of God immediately offered to defend him; but he said to them, "I have no need of you; go on before, and leave me alone with these men." They no sooner saw him alone and separated from his companions than they surrounded him, and drawing their swords, were prepared to slay him. But St. Vincent, turning towards them, and making the sign of the Cross, said, "*Per signum crucis de inimicis nostris libera me, Domine;*" "By the sign of the Cross, deliver me from our enemies, O Lord." The assassins suddenly stood immovable, without power to raise their swords: they became as statues. Then the Saint began to preach penitence to them; and when he discovered that they were all repentant,

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and resolved to change their lives, he allowed them to depart. At these words motion was restored to their bodies. They cast down their arms, and prostrating themselves at the Saint's feet, implored of him, besides pardon, the favour of being received into his company, to do public penance for their scandals, and to lead a Christian life. The holy master admitted them among his followers with much kindness, and they lived in that heavenly company, giving to all great examples of edification.[1]

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

Seventh Friday before the Saint's Feast.

Text.—The seventh perfection consists in carefully avoiding all persons and things which would not only draw us into sin, but which would even be to us an obstacle in overcoming imperfections.

Explanation.—Form a generous resolution to serve God by leading a mortified life, and by arming yourself with strength and patience, even as the Saint has counselled you. The other degree which he teaches us is the prudence with which we should carefully fly not only the occasions of offending God, but also all conversations and concerns which might have a tendency thereto. It is moreover necessary to shun intercourse with persons who, by their words and bad example, might lessen in you the fervour of spirit. The soul

[1] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. iii. c. 21.

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that enters on this kind of spiritual warfare, becomes formidable to the devil.

Practice.—We may exercise ourselves in this degree by conversing little with the world and much with God. Thus avoid conversations, evening parties, entertainments, balls, in order to arrive at perfection; you will never acquire it without purity of life and holiness of speech; two things so difficult to preserve in conversation and intercourse with the world.

Prayer to the Saint.—O most learned master of the spiritual life, St. Vincent Ferrer, you have taught us both by word and example, to what degree a soul should strive to render itself pure. Enlighten, then, I beseech you, my mind on the important doctrine, the secret of which you have this day taught me. I have great need of your assistance, plunged as I am in spiritual darkness, and what is worse, embarrassed with a multitude of vain and useless affections which retard my union with God. I moreover acknowledge, and doubtless I owe it to the prayers you have offered for me,—I acknowledge the frailty of my soul. It is weak, impotent, diseased, and this chiefly through its own fault; for knowing how fatal to its advancement an inordinate attachment to creatures is, it nevertheless persists in this blind affection. It is here, great Saint, that I have need of your special help. I humbly beseech you to impart light to my mind, and an energetic will to my heart. Let me clearly see the vanity and nothingness of all that is not of God; inspire me with a holy disrelis for the things of this world: pour out bitter-

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ness plentifully over all that would distract my heart from God; obtain for me the love of silence, retirement, solitude. Ah! may I be able like you to be a stranger in the midst of the tumult of human society! May I be able like you, to have in the depth of my heart an interior cell, impenetrable to the noise of earth! Then God will not forget me; he will speak to me in the secret of my soul, and my conversation, like yours, shall be in heaven. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—When St. Vincent Ferrer returned for a time into his own country, Queen Violante placed herself under his direction. The Saint addressed to her instructions so full of the unction of divine love, that the Queen, feeling within her such veneration for the man of God, was desirous of visiting him in his cell. She asked this favour of him at different times; but far from granting it, the Saint expressly forbade her to enter where he was; this only excited the Queen's curiosity the more. Casting aside all obedience, she went to the Convent followed by her court, choosing a moment when she supposed her holy confessor would be absorbed in prayer. The door of the cell was opened by the Religious; they found the Saint on his knees at prayer; but, wonderful to relate, it was impossible for the Queen to see him, although he was before her. The Religious, thinking that he was buried in contemplation, imagined that he was not aware of the Queen's visit, and apprised him of it, that he might rise to compliment her. "What! compliments," rejoined the Saint; "know you not that women cannot enter our

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cells? She has come in without my permission; she shall not see me till she leaves it." The Queen stood astonished at hearing the voice of the Saint whom she sought in vain to discover; she asked him where he was. "I am here," he answered, and he again added that, until she left his cell, she should not see him. The Queen at length left the cell, St. Vincent followed her, and when she was about to depart, he made himself visible to her, but with a severe countenance. Armed with a holy zeal, he cautioned her never more to come to his cell, or she would pay dearly for it. "God would have severely punished you," he said, "but for the ignorance and thoughtlessness which led to this fault." The Queen humbly received the admonition, and besought pardon; but she was not entirely cured of her curiosity. A few days afterwards she again returned to the Convent to see her holy master at prayer. But arrived there, she dared not, as on the former occasion, enter his cell. She did not even ask them to open it, but contented herself with merely looking at him through a chink in the door. She beheld the Saint absorbed in deep contemplation. His face shone with rays of light which illumined the whole chamber. The Queen turning, then, to her ladies, said: "Let us go, let us go, this man is far more holy than we think." The Queen's veneration for her holy master increased to such a degree, that every time she spoke to him, she prostrated herself at his feet, as though he were an angel from heaven.[1]

[1] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. ii. c. 6.

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The following miracle was wrought by the Saint at Valencia, his beloved city.

The Princess Jane of Prades, sister of Queen Margaret, the widow of Martin, King of Aragon, assisted one day at the preaching of St. Vincent Ferrer, which took place in the timber-market. Without any one knowing whence it came, a heavy stone was seen to tear asunder the hangings that were intended to shade off the sun, and it fell with great force on the head of the Princess. She was struck to the earth by the violence of the blow, and every one thought her dead. The assembly were greatly moved at seeing their Princess reduced to such a state. But the holy preacher encouraged them not to be alarmed, because the stone, he said, did not fall to kill the Princess, but only to knock down the tower which she carried on her head, meaning the extravagant ornament of her hair. Then the Saint turning to the Princess, said: "Princess Jane, rise up." At these words, and to the astonishment of the assembly, she got up sound and well, miraculously preserved from death and completely cured of her vanity. She so well knew how to profit by this blow from heaven and the advice of the holy preacher, that she clothed herself in modest garb, and never afterwards went beyond the requirements of her rank. Thus, at Valencia it was well understood that the fall of this stone was a mark of Divine Providence which was pleased to afford the Saint an opportunity of correcting this great Princess of her love of superfluous ornaments

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and fine clothing, which are frequently causes of scandal and ruin to indiscreet youth.[1]

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

Feast of St. Vincent Ferrer.

Text.—The eighth perfection for the servant of God is to bear in himself the Cross of Jesus Christ; and this Cross has four arms—the first is mortification of the passions; the second is a complete abandonment of all that passes away with time; the third is the renouncement of all carnal affections for relations and friends; and the fourth is contempt, hatred, and self-denial in the highest degree.

Explanation.—Up to the present the holy doctor has conducted the soul through the purgative way; but in this eighth degree, he commences to lead her in the illuminative way. The cross of self-denial is that spoken of by our Lord when He says: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke ix. 23). The soul is enlightened by this cross, which destroys the four principal causes of spiritual blindness, namely: the passions, self-interest, inordinate affection for relations, and unruly self-love. On the cross of self-denial, vice is at first destroyed by mortification; then by the renouncement of the passing things of time, the eternal is preferred to the temporal, and the soul re-

[1] Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. i. c. 17.

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cognises that it is better to lose the goods of the world than to forfeit God's grace, according as our Divine Master has said: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.) By detachment from relations the mind is purified from all the maxims dictated by flesh and blood. In short, by self-contempt we recognise the need we have of the grace and mercy of God, and the things that are necessary to enable us to attain perfection; then the desire to acquire it at any cost burns more and more in the soul.

Practice.—To embrace this cross of abnegation and of self-contempt, it behoves you to do all in your power to be freed from every habit of vice. Call especially to mind that the holy Fathers of the Desert, being desirous of attaining perfection, began by conquering the vice of the tongue. If you desire to be detached from the inordinate affection of yourself and your relations, meditate often on these words of Christ: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37). And on another occasion He said: "If any man come to Me, and hate not . . . . . his own life also"—that is, will not contradict his passions and subdue his evil inclinations—"he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26).

Prayer to the Saint.—Resplendent sun of virtue, mirror of sanctity, St. Vincent Ferrer; unless a ray of your light comes to disperse the darkness of my soul, how shall I embrace the cross of constant self-denial, blind as I am, and consequently knowing not how to

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appreciate either the merit or the abundance of the heavenly graces which are inclosed within this cross? I thank you for this precious instruction, for without the cross I can never reach the port of Christian perfection. But on this perilous ocean of the world, how can I sail without your aid and assistance? Be then, O glorious Advocate, the prudent pilot of my soul. Be to me the star which shall direct my steps in the great path of perfection; deliver me from the numberless perils which I encounter on this voyage. Yes, I hope in you who wearied yourself on earth with teaching the world the way of salvation; in heaven where you are, you will obtain for me, through your powerful intercession, the grace to practise what you so frequently taught both by your preaching and writings. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction. — One of the most beautiful virtues that adorned the great soul of St. Vincent was that of poverty. It was one of his most cherished delights when he encountered the cross of self-denial. He valued what the great Bishop of Hippo says, that he who should be possessed of all that the world has, and yet be without God's grace, would have nothing. On this account, he desired nothing that belonged to the earth. He moreover understood what St. Augustine adds, that whosoever has nothing on earth, but is in possession of God's grace, has everything. And for this reason, leaving all things, he made it his sole study how to enrich his soul with the wealth of grace, which are virtues. His soul was so rich in this poverty, that God was pleased to perpetuate the testimony of it by a miracle.

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Poor and humble, the holy Religious went on his missions and everywhere on foot, until, fifteen years before his death, having a wound in his leg, he was obliged to ride. The poor one of Jesus Christ contented himself with an ass, the meanest and most abject of animals. He accepted it as an alms, for he had not the money with which to purchase it; his poverty was, moreover, so great that he had not even wherewith to get it shod. He one day took it to a farrier begging him in charity to be so good as to shoe his beast. When the job was over, the farrier not at all thinking of working for charity, asked the Religious for the price of his labour and of the shoes. "I have nothing to give you," said the Saint, "but God will recompense you for your charity." "Oh, Father!" answered the workman, "I cannot work merely out of charity. I am, you see, burdened with a family. . . . . Pay me," he added, "or I will not restore to you your ass." The Saint again importuned him, exhorting him to bestow this alms on him; but the farrier once more said: "I cannot afford it, and you shall neither have the beast nor the shoes until you have paid me." Then the Saint—unheard-of prodigy!—turning to the beast, said to it: "This man will not give the shoes which he has put on you, because I cannot pay him, restore them to him, and let us go." At these words, the animal, as if it understood what was said, shook its feet one after the other, and miraculously cast off the shoes which the farrier had put on it. At the sight of this miracle the workman, stupefied, fell on his knees before the Saint,

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besought him to pardon his obstinate avarice, and shoeing the ass again, he bestowed the shoes and his labour on it out of charity. He was content with humbly recommending himself to the prayers of the Religious, acknowledging that if so great a Saint prayed for him, his intercession would benefit him far more than all the gold and treasures of the world.[1]

Seven *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

First Friday after the Saint's Feast.

Text.—The ninth perfection is to have a constant and lasting remembrance of the benefits received from God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Explanation.—We will suppose the soul exercised in all the virtues necessary to render her conformable to our Lord Jesus Christ, which are: obedience, poverty, charity, and self-contempt. Now follows the ninth degree, which consists, says the Saint, in the remembrance of the benefits and graces received from God. By this remembrance, your soul acknowledging its ingratitude, will detest it, and by this means you will practise self-contempt. You will increase marvellously in the knowledge of God. The sight of His liberality and goodness to you will inspire you with a salutary confusion. You will humble yourself, considering all the favours which He has bestowed on so wretched a creature. God says to the soul by the mouth of the

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 16.

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Prophet, "Remember thyself." And He gives to His servant Abraham, so desirous of perfecting himself in what is good, this means: the remembrance of God, by which He draws his mind continually towards his Benefactor, adding that there he will find the true path of perfection: "Walk before Me, and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1).

Practice.—In order to have this remembrance of God's benefits, it will be well to observe the following means. When you look upon a crucifix, call to mind immediately the benefit of Redemption. When you see infirm people, reflect on the blessings of health which you enjoy. When you meet the poor, think that you would be even more indigent, were it not for the temporal advantages which God so liberally dispenses to you. In short, when you hear of the defections of others, think that you would be far worse, if God did not hold His hand over your head. Such are the means to enable you to call unceasingly to your mind God, your great Benefactor.

Prayer to the Saint.—What a perfect model of thankfulness your admirable life presents to me, St. Vincent! You received choice graces from heaven; you rendered yourself worthy of them by your correspondence to them. Your fidelity in testifying a firm and sincere gratitude for them, incessantly drew new favours upon you. And now, when I consider my spiritual poverty in presence of the marvellous gifts which Divine Providence was pleased to bestow upon you, I ask myself whence is the source of such deep misery. Your teaching, O great Saint, reveals it to me; it is very clear, my indigence comes

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from my ingratitude; no, I do not sufficiently think of God's benefits to me. If I considered them attentively, my heart would melt with love within my breast. I humbly beseech you then, O sweet Protector, to obtain of the Divine Mercy the grace to have ever before my eyes the care which the Infinite Bounty has of me, both in the temporal and the spiritual order. What benefits accumulate on my head! Goods of the body, goods of the soul, preservation from a multitude of unknown dangers, vocation to Christianity, lights of faith, secret impulses of grace, promises of help, a sure expectation of unending happiness provided I am faithful to the sweet commandments of my God: this is an abridgment of the favours which the Lord has accorded me. "Thou art good, O God of Israel" (Psalm lxxvii.). Thou art bounteous towards Thy children! After the example of Thy holy preacher, "Thy mercies I will sing for ever" (Psalm lxxxviii.). "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth" (Psalm xxxiii.). No, my God, I will never more be unmindful of Thy benefits, and I will ardently celebrate the memory of them until the last day of my life. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—At Valencia, which was the theatre of the most wonderful miracles of our Saint, it happened that, passing one day through a certain street, St. Vincent heard clamorous voices and cries of rage proceeding from a house, accompanied with oaths, blasphemies, and horrible imprecations. The Saint, entering the house, on seeing the head of the family leave it choking with rage, found the wife, who con-

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tinued to curse her husband and to vomit forth execrable blasphemies. St. Vincent immediately undertook to appease her. He asked her why she was so furious, and for what reason she uttered such shameful blasphemies. The woman sobbing, answered: "Father it is not only to-day, but every day and every hour of the day, that this wretched man, my husband, persecutes me, and always ends by cruelly beating me and bruising me with blows; this is not life, my Father, it is a constant death, damnation of the soul, and a hell worse than that of the devils." "No, my daughter, you must not speak thus," said the Saint with extreme sweetness; "this anger will profit you nothing, except to offend God still more grievously, He Who for love of you suffered on the Cross on Calvary. But pray tell me why your husband persecutes and maltreats you in this manner." "It is because I am ugly," the woman replied. "And is it for that," said the Saint, "that he offends God so exceedingly?" Then raising his right hand over the woman's face, he added: "Go, my daughter, now you will no longer be ugly; but remember to serve God, and become holy." At that same moment the unhappy creature became the most beautiful woman in Valencia. After that the man of God seriously exhorted her to serve God most faithfully and to become holy, assuring her that for the future her husband would never have occasion to ill-use her on account of her uncomeliness. He then departed, gratified at having removed from that house an occasion of offending God so grievously, and having remedied the eternal lot of the husband who treated his wife with such cruelty.

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This miracle became so celebrated in Spain, that even to this day, when any one meets a deformed woman, it is said: "This woman has great need of the hand of St. Vincent."[1]

We shall offer here a necessary observation in connection with this great miracle. Corporal beauty in itself is not an occasion of sin, it is a gift of God. But it becomes matter of sin when women, for example, make it a subject of pride and vanity, when they seek to enhance it in an immoderate degree by their fine clothing, and for a guilty purpose, as St. Vincent himself has warned us. Thus, in giving to the afflicted woman the beauty necessary to please her husband, he told her that she was to become holy and to remember to serve God faithfully; that is, not to be puffed up with this gift that she had received, not to make a show of it to please others, but to reserve it only for her husband. In this manner the beauty of the body and that of the soul can be perfectly united in the same person, as we see them in St. Catherine, Virgin and Martyr, St. Cecilia, and so many other holy virgins. But, as St. Vincent Ferrer teaches, the beauty of Divine grace preserved in the interior of the heart greatly increases the comeliness and beauty of the body, in the same way that a crystal lamp, beautiful in itself, receives the greatest beauty and splendour when a light is placed in it, the reflection of which is to increase the brilliancy of the crystal. Let us be virtuous, and the expression of our countenance will even be improved thereby.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 17.

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Seven *Our Fathers*, Seven *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

SECOND FRIDAY AFTER THE SAINT'S FEAST.

Text.—The tenth perfection is to remain day and night in prayer.

Explanation.—To be mindful of the various benefits of God, the soul should pass to the exercise of almost constant prayer; and this consists in the union of the soul with God, by exerting itself as much as possible to holy and pious considerations. "They," says a holy doctor, "who receive gifts from God, without ever raising their heart and mind towards Him, resemble the unclean animals that eat the acorns which their owner casts to them from the tree, without raising their heads to see who it is that throws them." Thus do we act, when, tasting of the gifts of God which continually flow from heaven upon us, we forget to raise our head, and to look upon God, Who with such liberality and love favours us without ceasing. Think, then, always of God, for this is to pray always.

Practice.—This prayer taught by the Saint, is not difficult for those who will understand it. He does not mean that we are to be always on our knees at prayer; but that we should often raise the mind and heart to God. And surely, if we truly loved God, nothing would be more easy than to turn ourselves towards Him, and to thank Him; for wherever our thoughts are, there our love is also. The way to practise this prayer

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consists in ejaculatory prayers, sometimes expressed in the heart, at other times uttered with the lips.

Prayer to the Saint.—O most glorious Saint! who in your heavenly contemplations was constantly visited by the holy Patriarch Dominic, the holy Angels, the Queen of heaven, Mary Mother of God, and even by her Divine Son Jesus, Who by His sacred Presence delivered you from evil, and caressed you by touching your face with His divine hands in token of love! O great Saint! who, by your perseverance in conversing with God during whole nights, acquired such splendour that your countenance shone with light, as though it were a sun! Ah! if I could receive but one particle of that heavenly nourishment which you found in prayer! If one ray of your light illumined the darkness of my soul, then I should be able to meditate on the grandeurs of God, I should understand the importance of prayer, and I should be able to reject and despise all the vain consolations of earth. Enlighten me, O my Advocate St. Vincent! you who are so enlightened by God. I fix the eyes of my soul on you, and I trust in your powerful intercession. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—The holy preacher had almost always an infinity of persons who followed him in his apostolic journeys. This company was composed of people whom he had converted, and who were desirous of attaining Christian perfection. They spent all their time in prayer, and in prayer with their holy Father they found helps in their greatest necessities. One day, as this multitude followed him through a vast plain,

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the Saint, perceiving that all were fatigued with the journey, and were suffering greatly from hunger and thirst, began at first to recommend them to God in a short prayer; then, full of confidence in Divine Providence, he returned to the companions of his travels and encouraged them. "Not far hence," said he, "is a hillock," and at the same time pointed to it with his finger; "but a little further on we shall find a lodging where we shall be kindly received, and where we shall be able to recruit our strength." Indeed, they had scarce passed the hillock, when they discovered a sumptuous palace on the plain. They all entered therein. They were received by a number of young people so beautiful and fair that they might have supposed them to be angels; and these were, in reality, the heavenly spirits. There they found exquisite wines, bread, and other delicate viands, which seemed to them the food of Paradise. Having recruited their strength, and thanked God, the travellers offered a thousand thanks to their hosts, and set out again with their holy preacher. But observe the confirmation of the prodigy. When the Saint had gone the distance of a league, knowing that in his company there was a man who had little faith in his miracles, he was resolved to withdraw him from his error. He called him, and said: "I have left my kerchief at the inn from which we have come; go and fetch it. I left it on the table." The incredulous disciple obeyed, and went to the place where they had been received; but he sought in vain on every side. He could not discover in the place which they

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had but lately left either the palace or any trace of a house. It was a bleak plain, in the midst of which was a huge stone, and on the top of it lay the Saint's kerchief. Astonished, the disciple thought that this palace where they had been received could only be a habitation miraculously prepared by angels; and reasoning thus, he approached the Saint. He immediately sunk on his knees, and asked pardon of him for his incredulity. The Saint readily accorded it to him, but forbade him to make known the miracle. The disciple, however, unable to contain himself, proclaimed it on all sides, saying that the angels, wishing to honour St. Vincent, had descended from heaven, and miraculously prepared a habitation to receive him and his companions, and that they had been served by the hands of angels.[1]

Learn from the Saint to have recourse to prayer, and even in the midst of your occupations omit not this holy exercise. Regard it as the most important affair of those who, in imitation of the Saint, are desirous of acquiring perfection. Learn, moreover, from St. Vincent to conceal, as far as you are able, the graces which God gives you. But, after the example of the faithful disciple, you should publish, for God's glory, the Saint's miracles, as if those words of the angel had been addressed to you: "Bless the Lord, and relate His wonderful works" (Tobias). You will do this by reading the life and believing the miracles of St. Vincent. You will bless the Lord Who has glorified him in this

[1] Ranzano, *apud Bolland.*, April, Tom. I. p. 504, Miguel-Antist. Teoli. lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 17.

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manner, and you will make known to others the astounding miracles with which God enriched this new Apostle of Spain.

Seven *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

Third Friday after the Saint's Feast.

Text.—The eleventh perfection consists in a constant relish and desire of the Divine sweetness.

Explanation.—The soul being already exercised in virtue, and disposed especially by the two preceding degrees, the Saint commences now to lead her in the unitive way, which consists in the exercise of the holy love of God. By the memory of the Divine benefits, he teaches the soul to prepare the matter, or, as Cardinal Hugo of Saint-Cher says, "The fuel of this heavenly fire are the gifts of God." By the following degree prayer communicates the breath, under the action of which the fire of charity is lighted up. At present it is fitting to treat of the admirable effects of this fire of love. Souls arrived at this degree live, so to speak, in a continual fire. For as the hotter the iron is, the more it participates of the fire, so the more the soul thirsts after Divine love, the more is the fire of charity lighted up within her. And in the same manner as iron, when it is glowing with heat, becomes malleable under the hand of the workman, so likewise souls that are inflamed with Divine charity do not repine when adversity and infirmities come upon them, but support them with an

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heroic patience. Nay, more, they receive stripes from the hand of God with great joy, because they do in all things the Will of God. They love sufferings, and desire to suffer, in order to perfect themselves in the love of God, and to acquire the greatest amount of merit for the next life, as it is written of the seraphic Father St. Francis, who said, "The prize which I await is so great that suffering is to me a delight."

Practice.—Cardinal Hugo of Saint-Cher, explaining this verse of the thirty-sixth Psalm, "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart," asks, "Who are they who have thus the happy lot to rejoice in God?" And he answers, "They who despise the world." The Prophet Isaias teaches the way to do it, saying, "Cast from you concupiscence, carnal pleasures, riches, honours; despise your will, and seek in all things God's pleasure; repress your tongue; avoid vain and dangerous discourse: then you will experience those divine consolations which fill with incomparable delight the souls that taste of them." If we experience not these consolations so pure, or if we feel them but rarely, let us own, with the author of the "Imitation," that it is because we have not compunction of heart, and because we know not how to detach our affections from the vain and dangerous consolations of the world.

Prayer to the Saint.—The sweetness of God, the hidden manna, the consolations of the Holy Spirit, oh, how you understood all these by experience, great St. Vincent! and how you sighed after them as the hart pants for the living springs, and ecstasies of heavenly

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love were the just recompense of your desires. Alas! I experience not, as you did, the taste of the Divine sweetness. My soul is tepid and languishing, cold and indifferent to the caresses of the Divine Spouse. I know its cause, great Saint. It is because I am not sufficiently detached either from myself or from creatures. The Lord is a jealous God; He exacts a sincere renouncement of everything that is not of Himself; and if we offer Him a heart that is divided, He refuses it, and refusing it, He deprives it of the intimate communications of His sweetness. Fatal loss! worthy of being wept over with tears of blood! My sweet Protector, give me a right understanding to know this truth. Through your powerful intercession, O shining light of the Church! let me comprehend my true interests. Moisten the dryness of my soul, the aridity of my heart, that I may bid an everlasting farewell to the world and to myself; for if I despise temporal joys, those of heaven will be accorded me. Why should I hesitate between two states of bliss so unequal? No; I will balance them no longer. My choice is made. I have chosen my portion. I belong to God, and all that is in me has no claim either on the world or on myself. Ratify the vows which I pronounce in your presence. Offer them, I beseech you, to the Lord, in my name. It is you who, by your example, have inspired me with them. You will, then, receive them with that admirable goodness which is never wanting in you. Under your august patronage they will reach the throne of divine mercy. Your suffrage will render them pleasing to God; and

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then, O great Saint! the consolations of the mind will re-animate me, will encourage me, will fortify me, in order that I may apply myself to good works with unbounded ardour and perseverance. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—Among the miracles wrought by the Saint may be cited one which the Bishop of Lucera and Father Jerome Borselli relate.

The Saint preaching in the kingdom of Valencia, a certain Religious was present at his sermons. The latter reflecting on the zeal of the holy apostle in saving souls, and attentively considering the example of his heroic virtues, felt himself animated with an ardent desire to follow him. He therefore asked permission of his Abbot, who refused to grant his request. The Religious was consequently obliged to return to his Monastery; but the desire of hearing the sermons of the Saint burned more and more in his heart. One morning when, according to his calculation, the Saint went to preach, he ascended an eminence near the Monastery, and restraining his breath, strove from that place to hear the sermon. He obtained grace to hear so clearly and distinctly, although he was forty miles distant from the Saint, that he could write down the whole discourse without omitting a syllable. The holy apostle, who saw in spirit this marvel, remarked, at the close of his discourse: "My children, I exhort you who have been present at my sermon not to forget my words, for there are many who would wish to be present and cannot. Among them is a religious of a monastery many miles hence, and whose ears all my words have reached."

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themselves, but be of the few who, with a sincere heart, seek God's glory.

Practice.—A true and sincere desire for God's glory should be accompanied with an ardent zeal, because the greater the desire of honouring God is, the greater ought to be the zeal of the soul in preventing, with all its power, what may offend Him. But as God is offended in three ways—by thought, word, and deed, so, if you sincerely love Him, you should apply your thoughts, words, and acts to His glory, and to the destruction of sin. By your thoughts, seek seriously every means calculated to promote the glory of God and the good of souls, according as our Lord shall supply you with opportunities. To this you join prayer. In your prayers, pray specially for the conversion of unbelievers to the Catholic Faith, and for the return of sinners to penitence, by supplicating Him to hear you for His own glory, and for the salvation of souls. By your words, strive, in your charitable conversations, to reclaim sinners, in order to gain them to God; and if you have children or servants, teach them the Christian doctrine. As to works, be not afraid either of fatigue or inconvenience when there is question of rescuing souls from sin, reminding yourself that, in order to save souls, our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to die on the Cross.

Prayer to the Saint.—Most glorious Saint, to whom ought I always to have recourse unless to you, as an advocate who may obtain for me zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls? Were not you, like

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Daniel, a man of desires? Who does not know that your heart was continually consumed with love, through the ardent desire which you had for the conversion of sinners? Oh, you who, filled with the heavenly fire of God's love, never delaying, but going everywhere to enkindle it in the hearts of all, grant, O Seraph of love, that one spark of this heavenly fire may inflame my heart so cold, that it may incessantly burn with holy desires for God's glory and the salvation of souls. Obtain for me an increase of these desires, and grace to witness their accomplishment in me. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—The holy King David says in the Book of Psalms that God satisfies the desires of the heart of him who serves Him faithfully. We see the fulfilment of these words in St. Vincent. Seeing that among unbelievers the Jews are the most perfidious, he was on that account most desirous of their conversion. It was granted to him to lead a considerable number of them to the Catholic Faith. We shall instance here the conversion of a whole synagogue.

St. Vincent was one day introduced into a synagogue at Salamanca by an Israelite, with whom he was leagued in friendship for that purpose. He entered with the crucifix in his hand, which caused confusion and dismay among the assembly. But the Saint tranquillised them by saying that he had come to speak to them on a matter of the utmost importance, for he knew of no affair that was more important than that of salvation. At the word "affair of importance," the Jews then imagined that he was about to speak to them of some

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matter of public interest, and they listened to him with great attention. Then, in soft and gentle words, he began to speak of the holy Christian Faith, and particularly of the Passion and Death of the Son of God. While the holy preacher strove to persuade the unbelievers of the glories of the Cross of Christ, the Redeemer of the world, there appeared a large number of crosses on the dress of each one assembled in that celebrated synagogue. But what is even more wonderful, is that the crosses which appeared outside the garments of men and women, penetrated invisibly to their hearts, and, moved by Divine grace, they all became Christians. The Saint's consolation was so great in this vast conversion, that he was pleased to baptise all with his own hands. Then he consecrated the synagogue into a church, which was called the True Cross.[1]

Such are the fruits of the holy desires of St. Vincent Ferrer. Bless God for having bestowed on this great Saint the favour of seeing so many unbelievers converted, and reflect that, if you lead a holy life, you will be able by it to convert a great number of sinners, for though holiness of life be the most modest, yet it is the most efficacious preaching, and produces great fruit in souls.

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, seven *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

[1] Miguel, Bzovius, Michael Pio. Teoli. lib. i. Tratt. iii. c. 19.

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FIFTH FRIDAY AFTER THE SAINT'S FEAST.

Text.—The thirteenth perfection is to have, under all circumstances, that mercy and compassion for our neighbours which we would desire others to have in regard to us.

Explanation.—The love of our neighbour preserve the love of God, and if the soul be cold in its love and charity to its neighbour, it is a sign that it has little love for God, inasmuch as the love of our neighbour springs from the love of God, and because by the love of our neighbour, the love of God is strengthened, as St. Gregory affirms. St. John also assures us of the same: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John iv. 20).

Our Saint recommends both the love of our neighbour and its effect, that is, mercy. He who truly loves his neighbour, succours him in his necessities and miseries, even as St. John expresses it in the same epistle. This, then, is the degree of perfection which St. Vincent proposes to you. If you really love God, you ought surely to love your neighbour, made in the likeness of God. The more the love of God increases in you, the more will love, mercy, and compassion towards your fellow-men also increase; for you will call to mind those words of Jesus Christ, that whatever you shall do to your neighbour, He will regard as done to Himself (Matt. xxv. 40).

Practice of Charity to our Neighbour. — Do you earnestly desire to be closely united to God? It

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behoves you, then, persevering in the exercise of perfection, to clothe yourself with the garment of charity, by applying yourself to the exact observance of this rule: Do not to others what you would not wish others to do to you. Thus, if you are a creditor, you will not wish that others should be remiss in paying you. Do, then, what was said to the young Tobias by his father: "If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all" (Tobias iv. 15). If you should be placed in necessity or affliction, you would not wish to be abandoned, but helped. You ought, then, to observe this other advice, given to the same Tobias: "Turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee" (Tobias iv. 7). Lastly, you would not wish others to judge rashly of your actions, or to speak evil of you. Observe, then, this commandment of our Lord: "Judge not, that you may not be judged" (Matt. viii. 1). No, never judge the acts of others, nor slander them, and keep from murmuring against them. We may, moreover, practise this degree of perfection by praying for our enemies, blessing those who revile us, doing good to those who persecute or in any way injure or affront us. We ought to practise Christian perfection by especially guarding against rendering to any one evil for evil, as our Lord Jesus Christ has Himself taught us.

Prayer to the Saint.—O glorious Saint, how admirable was your charity towards your fellow-men! All

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the unbelievers baptised by you, all the sinners converted, the sick healed, the poor and afflicted succoured in their necessities, are striking proofs of the ardent love which you bore to your neighbour. It might be said of you what the Apostle St. Paul said of himself: "I became all things to all men that I might save all" (1 Cor. ix. 22). Thus, in your admirable life, you were for more than forty years indefatigable in the exercise of charity to your neighbour, unmindful either of the inconveniences of long journeys, or bodily indisposition, or old age, or want of sleep, or your occupations so numerous. Always prompt to solace the afflicted, you went in search of them as soon as they called for you. Give me, O glorious Advocate, one particle of that fire of charity which burned so ardently in your breast! I have recourse to you in all humility. I earnestly implore you, and I trust in your intercession to obtain for me so great a love of God that, after your example, I may consecrate my life to the service of my neighbour, and assist him in all his needs, that I may enjoy, like you, the glory promised to charitable and merciful souls. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—The charity of St. Vincent to his neighbour was so heroic that it might be truly said of him what the holy man Job said: "From my infancy mercy grew up with me; and it came out with me from my mother's womb" (Job xxi. 18).

From his childhood, in fact, St. Vincent gave all that he possessed to the poor. He clothed them as well as he was able, and frequently washed their feet. But

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what is most admirable is that, from his tenderest years, in order to solace the afflicted, he besought God to work miracles. Among the Saint's innumerable prodigies, we shall cite two, which are truly wonderful, and which will give a just idea of his great charity to his neighbour.

The first was wrought in his childhood; he at that time with great simplicity, and while amusing himself, raised the dead to life. The second was when he supplicated the most Holy Trinity to obtain the pardon of a public sinner, if she would confess her sins. These facts happened as follows.

The young Thaumaturgus had a school-fellow of his own age, nine years old, who was in the habit of calling him at the hour of school. But this young child one day suddenly died. He went according to custom to call him, when he heard weeping and lamentation in the house of his friend. He hastily ascended the stairs, and found the child's mother in the greatest desolation. He inquired of her the cause of her affliction. "My son is dead!" she replied, sobbing, "My son is dead!" Vincent was moved at this sorrowful news, and to console the mother, after the example of Jesus who said to the chief of the synagogue: "Thy daughter is not dead, but sleepeth," he smiled and said to the mother: "Let us go, my friend is not dead, he is sleeping. Let us go to see him." Vincent approached the bed, and taking the cold and rigid corpse by the hand, he exclaimed: "Get up; it is time to go to school." And at the sound of his voice, as if he were waking from a profound

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sleep, the young boy opened his eyes. He restored him alive to his mother, who was in the utmost astonishment. Vincent made him dress himself and took him along with him to school. Such were the first-fruits of his charity.[1]

The other trait is as follows. The Saint passing to Pampeluna, and his sanctity being well known to all the inhabitants, they besought him to interest himself in behalf of the spiritual needs and conversion of a person of notoriously bad character, who would continue impenitent to the last day of her life. The charity of St. Vincent, which desired nothing so much as the salvation of souls, drew him promptly and with joy into the presence of this poor sinner. He unhappily found her completely hardened. She was obstinate and so despairing of her salvation that she exclaimed, blaspheming: "It is impossible for me to be saved; God cannot pardon either the multitude or the enormity of my sins." The Saint began, then, with all the energy of his soul to offer her powerful reasons which might encourage her to hope for a generous pardon from God. But it was useless, that soul was hardened in evil. Seeing this, St. Vincent raised up his heart to God, made a short prayer, and led by a divine inspiration, he promised the sinner that her absolution should come in writing from heaven, if she would promise to make her confession. The wretched woman began to ridicule a pledge so extraordinary and which appeared to her impossible; yet she said to the Saint: "If it be so, I am very willing to

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. i. c. 18.

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confess." Then, the Saint procured pen and paper, and wrote these words: "Brother Vincent Ferrer beseeches the most Holy Trinity to grant the sinner here present the absolution of her sins." He then folded the paper, and cast it into the air; the document flew out of the house; but some minutes afterwards it returned folded and closed. Wonderful to relate, on opening it, St. Vincent found the following promise written in letters of gold: "We, the most Holy Trinity, at the request of our Vincent, grant the sinner of whom he speaks, the pardon of her faults; We dispense her from all the punishment which she ought to undergo; and if she confesses, she shall be carried to heaven in half an hour, where she shall reign eternally with us . . From heaven . . . We, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." St. Vincent read the answer, and without delay the happy woman made her confession; in half an hour afterwards her soul took its flight to heaven. Oh! happy sinner![1] If so extraordinary a favour was obtained for this great sinner at the prayer of our Saint, while he was yet living, what ought not we to expect from him—great sinners as we are, but who are devoted to him—now that, consumed with charity, he rejoices in God Whom he beholds face to face, and who being near to Him, continually intercedes for those who have recourse to his prayers!

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

[1] "Vieille Chronique de Saint-Vincent," Ferrarini, Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 2.

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SIXTH FRIDAY AFTER THE SAINT'S FEAST.

Text.—The fourteenth perfection is to render thanks to God in all things, and to praise and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

Explanation.—Ingratitude dries up the fountain of God's bounty; but gratitude causes the stream of the Divine favours to flow back to God through thanksgiving, and they return to us multiplied, and clothed with still more abundant graces.

Practice of Thanksgiving.—The Apostle St. Paul commands us to show forth our gratitude when he says: "Be ye thankful." We are thankful in words, when we recite with devotion and affection the Divine praises. St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, says that the Blessed Virgin Mary has always on her lips these sweet words, "*Deo gratias.*" Let us imitate our Mother. We should, moreover, show our gratitude by works, and that by living in such a manner as not to lose the grace of God. Oh! how ungrateful are they who voluntarily lose the gifts received and who render evil for good! If, then, you acknowledge that God has bestowed on you an infinite number of spiritual and temporal graces, remember these benefits must not be requited with offences, The Saint observes that it behoves us to thank God in all things; and they who truly love our Lord will not content themselves with thanking Him for the favours which He bestows, but will, moreover, thank Him in their afflictions and sufferings, well knowing that it is by an effect of His infinite love that God sends infirmi-

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ties, poverty, and other tribulations. Whence it follows that in all the dispositions of His Providence, God deserves to be praised, blessed, and loved. The Apostle therefore exhorts the Thessalonians to this universal gratitude, when he says, "In all things give thanks" (1 Thess. v. 18.)

Prayer to the Saint.—Oh! if, like you, I could but have this sublime gratitude for God's benefits, O glorious Saint, you who read in all creatures, as in a book, the end for which God created them; recognising what is to my profit, in order that by it I may arrive at the happy conclusion that God is my only good! For God, says the prophet, "gave them the lands of the Gentiles; and they possessed the labours of the people; that they might observe His justifications, and seek after His laws" (Psalm civ. 45). Yes, like you, my glorious advocate, I will join the three children of Babylon in inviting all creatures to bless the Lord, and I will say to them: "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all for ever" (Daniel iii. 57). This is the favour that I implore, O glorious Saint! Deign to cloth me with your sentiments of gratitude, that I may never more mistake the means for the end, by abusing creatures to offend God, Who has given me all to love and serve Him. I hope for this grace through your efficacious protection. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—St. Vincent passed one day through the city of Zamora, where he had formerly wrought miracles, and among others had converted two young debauchees by preaching on the vice of impurity.

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The Saint was received at a convent where the Religious treated him with great politeness, and when he was on the point of leaving them, they asked him to leave behind him some token of remembrance. The Saint, who was amiable towards all, and especially to those who had done him any good, said: "Most willingly; I will leave you our bell. Take care of it, and treat it with respect, for it will serve a great, noble, and agreeable purpose." The Religious did not comprehend then what this noble and agreeable purpose meant. They placed the Saint's present in a place apart, where they kept it with much respect, as a precious relic of a great saint. It was not long before they discovered the end for which St. Vincent had left them his bell. This was to announce the approaching death of some Religious, as was really the case; for the bell sounded of itself some days previous to the death of any one among them. Such was the Saint's gratitude towards that Religious Community, and this miracle continued until the year 1550. The bell sounded for the last time at the death of Father John of St. Dominic. It was thus that our Saint requited the charitable hospitality of those good Fathers. This prodigy resembles that of the bell of St. Thomas, at the convent of Salerno, which continues to this day to sound miraculously in order to announce the death of a Religious. All who persevere in devotion to the Saint, may expect similar graces, and even greater.[1]

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

[1] Teoli: le vii. Venerdi.

SEVENTH FRIDAY AFTER THE SAINT'S FEAST.

Text.—The fifteenth perfection, after having practised all that we have said, is to repeat within ourselves, by truthfully acknowledging: "Lord Jesus Christ, my True God, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I can boast of nothing. I serve thee imperfectly, and I am in all things an unprofitable servant."

Explanation.—Humility is the fuel by which the fire of the love of God and our neighbour is kept alive. And even as the lily springs up white and beautiful, but nevertheless always bends towards the earth, so does an humble soul. The more she rises in perfection and whitens by the purity of her conscience, the more beautiful she becomes by the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, the more does she humble and abase herself, being incapable of blotting from her memory her nothingness and misery. "He that shall humble himself," says our Lord, "shall be exalted" (Matt. xxiii. 12). Thus, the more the soul humbles herself, the more she concentrates herself in her own nothingness, the more does she rise to this sublime degree of perfection face to face with God, Who exalts the humble.

Practice of Humility.—Tobias taught his son the practice of this virtue in these words: "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words" (Tobias iv. 14). That is, according to commentators, we should not only exclude all vanity, pomp, and pride from our works, but that our thoughts, words, and all our acts should breathe nothing but humility. Nay more, should

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these works themselves be of a nature to elicit the praises of men, we ought to chase from us, as so many unholy suggestions of the devil, every thought of vainglory and desire to be praised. Think seriously, not of the little good that you have done, but of your faults, and of all the virtues which you lack. Think how little you love God in comparison with the love which St. Vincent bore Him, when he was on earth, and with that which he bears Him now in heaven, where he is united with the other Saints. In view of these considerations you will feel an extraordinary fervour enkindled within you, a great love of God which will excite you to persevere in good, to perform great and heroic works, and to love God and serve Him ever more.

Such, pious readers, are the exercises of virtue taught by the great St. Vincent Ferrer for the attainment of perfection. They are proposed to you on these seven Fridays before and after his Feast, which are consecrated in his honour. You will, moreover, do well to fast, to confess and communicate with fervour. All these acts will greatly assist you to acquire the Christian virtues. Thus disposed, and under the protection of the great Saint, may you be enabled, by studying the degrees of perfection which he teaches you, to lay hold on them more easily and to put them in practice! Yet remember, that after having performed all that is here laid down, you should still say from the depth of your heart what our Lord Jesus Christ taught His apostles to say: "We are unprofitable servants."

Prayer to the Saint.—Oh! glorious St. Vincent,

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would that I could have, in the midst of my miseries, but one particle of the humility which you had in the midst of your great perfection and glory! Alas! my poor soul is far from the humility which shines forth in you! You humble and working miracles, I haughty and proud, and doing nothing but sin! You humble and illumined with the gift of prophecy, I proud in the darkness of intellect which dims my soul! You humble and holy, I a sinner and haughty! Most humble Saint, unless you procure me humility, I am lost, and shall never be able to build up in my heart the edifice of perfection which you have taught me. Let me understand that to desire to accumulate virtue without humility, is to cast dust to the wind which scatters it in a twinkling of the eye. Grant that I may never be forgetful to this cardinal virtue. Amen.

Spiritual Instruction.—One of the greatest marvels that shone forth in St. Vincent, was his profound humility in the midst of honours. When he entered a city, he was usually greeted with the ringing of bells. The secular clergy and religious walked before him in procession, clad in their sacred vestments and bearing the cross. Joined to them were the guilds of laymen, the artisans, each with its standard or banner. When the news of his approach was known, all the people of the neighbouring towns came forth to see him, as if he had been an Apostle of the first ages. The nobility went before to meet him. The grandees of Spain received him with uncovered heads. The sovereigns of Aragon, Spain, and England followed him on foot, and often received

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him on bended knee. The Bishops and other ecclesiastical prelates were so anxious for his arrival, that they went long distances to meet him. When he entered the cities on a vile beast, in imitation of Jesus Christ, he was surrounded with a large circle of iron, in order not to be oppressed by the multitude. At other times arriving on foot, he was conducted under a canopy to the Cathedral where he made his first visit; on other occasions he was borne on the shoulders of men, as the statues of the saints are borne in procession, and all chanted: "Blessed is he who cometh in the Name of the Lord." The devotion of the people was such, that all strove to get him to touch either their chaplets or their handkerchiefs.

Being one day conducted in this manner into Valencia, his native city, a Religious of the Seraphic Father St. Francis, a great friend of the Saint, observing all this, advanced near the crowd and cried out to the Saint: "Brother Vincent, how is pride at this moment?" St. Vincent replied: "It comes and goes, but never stays with me." He knew that the people of the towns to which he went would wish to receive him with like honours; so it was his custom before entering to kneel down with his companions and to recite the words of the Psalmist: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy Name give glory" (Psalm cxiv. 1).[1]

This admirable humility in the midst of such great honours might be ranked among the prodigies which we have seen in this work, and which constitute but a small

[1] Teoli: le vii. Venerdi.

portion of the innumerable miracles which God has wrought and still continues to work by means of the powerful intercession of our Saint. You will experience all their effects if you render yourself worthy of them by imitating the virtues of our august Advocate, and by persevering in the path of perfection which you have entered on under his powerful protection throughout the course of these Fridays which precede and follow his Feast.

Seven *Our Fathers*, seven *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Fathers*, the prayer *Quisque*, or the Litanies.

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SECTION THE SECOND.

A Novena in honour of St. Vincent Ferrer for the Nine Days which precede the Saint's Feast, the Fifth of April, or follow the Translation of his Relics, the Sixth of September.

FIRST DAY.

THE FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT.

"*Confige timore tuo carnes meas: a judiciis enim tuis timui;*" "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Psalm cxviii. 120).

MEDITATION.

I.—How Terrible will be the Account to be rendered at the Judgment-seat of God.

WE cannot utter a word, nor conceive a single thought, nor feel a disorderly movement within us, which the Supreme Judge will not write in the book of life and death to be used as the matter of His examination and the motive of His sentence. "All things are naked and open to His eyes" (Heb. iv. 13). "Thou hast observed all my paths, and hast considered the steps of my feet" (Job xiii. 27). Why is the Divine justice so rigorous with regard to a feeble creature like man, corrupt in his thoughts, and drinking-in iniquity like water? Lord, if Thou didst exercise this rigour

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towards the celestial intelligences enriched with sublime perfections, there would be some room for astonishment; but as for a feeble being like myself, kneaded with unruly inclinations, Thou dost not tolerate an idle word that is spoken, nor the briefest moment that is wasted: this, O terrible God, is what exceeds my comprehension! And, nevertheless, it is true; Thou hast solemnly declared it. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36). If we must answer for a word that injures no one, what must be said of unbecoming words? — what of impure thoughts, murders, adulterous glances, a whole life prostituted to works of iniquity? If this be so—and who shall doubt it?—will not all that we can conceive of the rigours of that judgment fall far short of the reality? Great God! what fear will take possession of man when, in the sight of heaven and earth, he shall hear himself reproached with having, on such a day, spoken words that had no profitable meaning? But what confusion will especially cover the face of the sinner, when he shall behold those shameful actions of his which he so carefully concealed in the privacy of his home, the turpitude of his early life, the secrets of his conscience laid open to the gaze of the universe? Who is the man whose purity of soul is so perfect as not to feel himself covered with shame? The accusation of faults under the inviolable seal of confession sometimes appears so humiliating that the unhappy sinner prefers to groan under the weight of his prevari-

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cations rather than relieve his conscience by declaring them in the sacred tribunal of penance. Ah! what will be his confusion when he shall see his conscience laid bare in the sight of God and of all generations past, present, and to come! This confusion will be so terrible, says the Prophet, that the sinner, in his despair, will "call upon the mountains to cover him and the hills to fall upon him, to hide him from that frightful ignominy" (Osee x.).

II.—How Terrible will be the Sentence of the Supreme Judge.

This sentence will resound with the noise of thunder in the ears of the wicked. "Depart from Me, you cursed," the Son of God will say, "into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). Alas! says holy Job, "if we cannot support the least of His words, who shall be able to behold the thunder of His greatness?" (Job xxvi.) This sentence will be of such effect that the earth will, at that very instant, open and engulph in its bosom all those voluptuous persons who consumed their hearts in the enjoyment of profane and criminal delights. But what of the torments of hell! There the body of the sinner shall be a prey to devouring flames which shall never be extinguished, and his soul to the worm that will gnaw his conscience without ceasing. There eternal tears shall flow, there the frightful gnashing of teeth shall be heard, which the Holy Scripture tells us of in so many

there the unhappy reprobate, mad with despair,

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shall turn his rage against God and himself; he shall devour his own flesh, he shall force out his entrails by the violence of his groanings, he shall tear himself in pieces, and seem, as it were, to consume himself with blasphemies against the Judge Who cast him into that place of vengeance. Then each one will curse his own miserable lot, and the day which gave him birth. O unhappy sinner! thy tongue shall for ever utter blasphemies, thy ears shall be for ever greeted with groanings, thy eyes shall behold nothing but suffering and sorrow around thee, thy soul shall find no refreshment amid the flames that will for ever devour it!

Behold, such is the result of a life spent in criminal delights. Alas! what torments of bitterness that drop of honey has produced! Then will they understand the vanity of sensible pleasures, the deceits of the enemy of salvation, the deplorable facility with which they fell into his snares. Fool, that I am," will the hopeless sinner exclaim, "I have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto me, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon me. I wearied myself in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord I have not known" (Wisdom v. 6, 7). Useless regrets, barren repentance; weep, weep on without ceasing, ungrateful sinner, the time of merit is at an end!

III.—Prayer.

O my God, the most illustrious solitaries trembled at the hour of death, although their lives were so pure and

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penitent; what reason then have I to fear the rigours of Thy judgment, I who have always lived in sin and impenitence? If the just can hardly be saved, what shall become of the unjust and sinners? O King of terrible Majesty, what answer shall I give when Thou passest sentence upon me? What shall I be able to say to Thee before Whom the just shall scarce be found just when Thou shalt rigorously examine them and judge them without mercy? I beseech Thee, O just Avenger of the world's iniquity, to let me experience the salutary effects of Thy mercy before I appear in Thy presence to give an account of my whole life. No, the source of Thine infinite goodness is not yet dried up, nor is the time of Thy rigorous justice yet come. O God, my Saviour, I, this day, implore Thy merciful forbearance. I repent, I detest my sins. Thou hast never despised, O good Jesus, Thou never wilt despise a contrite and humble heart. Pardon then, O Lord, pardon a heart bruised with the keenest sorrow. Withdraw not Thy hand from me, but deign to confirm me in the twofold sentiment of confidence and fear, especially that salutary fear which will securely work out my salvation. "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear; for I am afraid of Thy judgment" (Psalm cxvii. 120).

EXAMINATION.

I. Have I ever seriously reflected on the rigours of God's judgment?

II. Has this fear been efficacious or barren? What evil have I avoided by its impulse? What good have I

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accomplished? Am I not sunk in the mire of sin? Am I not under the yoke of my passions? Is mine the strait path to heaven, or the broad road that leads to the abyss? Am I not too loath to be converted?

III. Have not I neglected the inspirations of God, His lights, graces, and consolations? Have not I omitted the rules of life that I imposed on myself? What fruits have I drawn from my exercises of piety, my confessions, communions, and other good works? Do not I resemble the foolish virgins?

IV. Have I had an exaggerated confidence in God's mercy?

V. Have not I, on the contrary, to reproach myself with too great a mistrust, dejection, and faintheartedness in the affair of salvation?

Conclusion.—Fear sin more than death.

Spiritual Instruction.—St. Vincent Ferrer must have possessed, in a high degree, the fear of God in his heart since he so effectually inspired his hearers with it. No one can impart to others what he does not himself possess. The words of the Saint were truly a devouring fire, a hammer which broke the stones in pieces, that is, hard and unpliant hearts. From his mouth came forth "the blast of the mighty," which the Scripture compares to "a whirlwind beating against a wall" (Isaias xxv. 4). His voice was truly "the voice of the Lord which breaketh the cedars," "which divideth the flame of fire" (Psalm xxviii. 5, 7). His radiant countenance, his voice of thunder, his animated gestures,

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his language full of force and energy, his zeal, his ardour, all combined to subdue the souls of men, inspiring them with sentiments of fear, which are the beginnings of salvation, and disposed them to embrace a life conformable to the law of God. Besides the wonderful conversions which the Saint accomplished by his preaching, some of which have been already recorded, we shall instance two others which show the marvellous power that he possessed over the hearts of men. The first is that of Olivier Rouger, who, at the first preaching of the Saint at Rennes in Brittany, was completely changed. He was so struck by the piercing words of St. Vincent that he embraced a life of penance and spent the rest of his days in compunction, in tears, and in the constant practice of works of mortification. The second is that of a person named Bercoll, at Perpignan. This man, well known throughout the country for his wealth and his shameful mode of life, was seized with so lively a repentance at the close of one of the Saint's discourses that, in order to expiate his past misdeeds, he was not content with long fasts and scourging himself to blood; but sold his possessions, distributed his money to the poor, despoiled himself of everything, retired into solitude, and passed the rest of his life in a grotto, in prayer and mortification.[1] May you also, by the powerful intercession of St. Vincent, be touched with sorrow at the remembrance of the terrible judgment of God, and sincerely embrace a life of penance!

Litanies of the Saint at the end of this volume.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 4.

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SECOND DAY.

THE VICE OF PRIDE.

"*Superbiam nunquam in tuo sensu, aut in tuo verbo dominari permittas: in ipsa enim initium sumpsit omnis perditio;*" "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words: for from it all perdition took its beginning" (Tobias iv. 14).

MEDITATION.

I.—Disorder of Pride.

A PROUD person is one who believes in an excellence which he does not possess, and takes complacency therein. Now, there is nothing less grounded than this absurd pretension. For what is man in a physical point of view? A little dust, a mass of corruption; dust fit to be trodden under foot, fetid corruption which inspires disgust. "Why is earth and ashes proud?" asks the Prophet (Eccles. x. 9). And what is man in his moral aspect? A being conceived in sin, living in the obscure darkness of ignorance, inclined to evil from his infancy, without virtue, without grace, destitute of strength, a child of wrath, rebellious to his master, a traitor to his God, guilty of a multitude of prevarications. Consider thyself well, O man; compound of evil qualities, thou art sunk in every species of disorder. Far from glorying in thyself, ought thou not rather to humble thyself to the lowest abyss? Know thyself well: "Abominable to God and unprofitable on the earth, is the man who drinketh iniquity like water" (Job xv. 16).

He glories in a fortune. Is it his own? Cannot

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an accident despoil him of it? Do riches impart virtue, health, or happiness? The rich man dies like other men. He goes more easily to hell than others. The praises that surround him are not sincere, the pleasures that he has abused render him more contemptible.

Others are puffed up with their knowledge. But the science of this world is a mere vapour. What purpose does it serve without the science of salvation? True science is the knowledge of one's duties.

There are some men who make virtue and good works a subject of pride. "Yet, what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) We are totally ignorant of the merit of our works before God. How many vices disguise themselves under the garb of virtue! How many actions, good in themselves, are corrupted by vainglory! How frequently it is that what appears light to us, is only darkness in the eyes of God! The infallible judgments of the Sovereign Arbiter are very different from ours. "Woe," says St. Augustine, "to the most virtuous life, if God judges it without mercy!" It is true, my God, the evil that I do is always evil without any admixture of good; and the good that I perform, when I do perform it, is but too often accompanied with evil by the defects which I mix therein.

II.—The Chastisements of Pride.

The punishment of the proud angels is a terrible example of the horror which God bears to this vice; in

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an instant they were precipitated from the highest heaven to the lowest hell. Blemished with this stain, he who eclipsed by his brightness the most brilliant stars of the firmament, became horrible as darkness; he was by the sublimity of his nature above the angels themselves, and he became a devil, the most hideous, the most horrible of the devils. If God therefore uses such severity towards creatures so noble and so perfect, how will He act with regard to man, who is but dust and ashes? God is never in opposition with Himself, and in man, as in the angels, pride angers Him, and humility pleases Him.

"God resisteth the proud," says the Book of Proverbs (ch. iii). How does He resist them? By sensible, terrible chastisements. Thus did He resist the angels by chasing them from Paradise and condemning them to the ignominies of hell; thus did He resist the first man by dispossessing him of His favours and giving him up to the innumerable miseries of this life. Thus did He resist Pharao by engulphing him with his whole army in the sea; Dathan, Core, and Abiron, by casting them alive into hell; Nabuchodonosor, by changing him into a beast; Sennacherib, by miraculously putting him to flight in the sight of Israel, and permitting him to be slain by the hands of his own children; Aman, by disposing events in such a way that he was himself hanged on the very gibbet prepared by his own orders for the humble Mardocheus; King Herod, by smiting him by the hand of an angel at the moment when he yielded to the thought of pride, for

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being speedily devoured by worms, he expired. But God also resists the proud in a secret, hidden, and alas! most terrible manner; that is, by withdrawing His grace from them. "He giveth His grace to the humble;" He refuses it to the proud. What shall man do, abandoned to his own strength and destitute of help from above? Will he not necessarily fall into every species of disorder, and will he not surely end in perdition? The wind extinguishes the light and withers the rose; pride is the breath of hell which quenches the light of wisdom and withers the rose of grace. Its result will be tears, flames, and confusion, which will have no end; and these tears, these flames, this confusion will be proportionate to the degree of pride which the soul has exhibited in life. "As much as she hath glorified herself . . . . . so much torment and sorrow give ye to her" (Apoc. xviii. 7). Contemplate with terror, O my soul, the chastisement which thou hast thyself merited by thy pride.

III.—Prayer

I confess, O my God, that pride is one of my vices; it is my deepest wound. I am born in sin, nothingness is my origin; I am poor, miserable, and in want; this body which I treat with so much care will soon become a prey to worms and corruption; yet, O folly, I exalt myself, I imagine myself to be something, and I am desirous that others should esteem me. Yes, my God, to Thee alone belong honour and glory; our heritage is shame and confusion. All that I have, I owe to Thy

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liberality! all that I am is due to Thy mercy; to Thee alone I owe entire homage, and cannot claim for myself the glory which belongs to Thee. Let it be entirely Thine, O my God! and woe to me if I desire to appropriate the least particle of it to myself! Even the benefits which Thou hast accorded me, far from inspiring me with pride, are to me a subject of humiliation, on account of the bad use I have made of them. How many others would have profited by them more than myself! Abandon me not, O Lord, to the spirit of pride. Grant me humility, that virtue so precious in Thy sight, that virtue by which I shall be pleasing to Thee, and to which Thou canst refuse nothing. Amen.

EXAMINATION.

I. Have I felt in my heart an excessive longing for the esteem and praise of men? Have I desired their admiration and applause? Have I acted with a view to draw their notice, approbation, and praise upon myself? Have I sought, by a secret movement of pride, to appear better than I really am, carefully to conceal my defects, and to affect virtues which I have not?

II. How have I received the flatteries that have been addressed to me personally? Was it with eagerness—did I earnestly court them? If refused me, am I not sharp, irritable, passionate?

III. Have I despised my neighbour? Have I shown disdainful airs, or fierce looks towards him? Have I spoken haughtily to him? Have I reproached

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him with his physical defects? Have I wounded and contradicted him without reason?

IV. Have I been disobedient to those who are placed in authority over me? Have I been obstinate in my own opinions? Have I received with a bad grace the counsel and advice that have been given to me? Have I been ambitious to command?

V. Do I, on the contrary, esteem myself as nothing, as the mere refuse of the world, unworthy to live in the company of Christian men?

VI. Have I sacrificed my conduct, my speech, my apparel to the tastes and whims of the age? Have I incurred useless expenses to please the world? Have I offended against the rules of modesty, simplicity, and humility, in my behaviour?

VII. How have I regarded humiliations, contempt, obscurity? Do I sincerely delight in them?

Conclusion.—Frequently beseech God to grant you the virtue of humility.

Spiritual Instruction.—The great St. Vincent possessed humility in a very eminent degree. The proof of it is in his "Treatise on the Spiritual Life," where, speaking of himself, he considers himself a mass of rottenness and corruption, a masterpiece, so to speak, of wickedness and malice. His letters bore the signature of "Brother Vincent, a sinner." "The contempt which he had of himself was incredible," says Flaminius.

Hence, an ardent desire to know his own faults. He fervently besought his brethren and companions to point

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Thus, the Apostle calls avarice an idolatry (Eph. v. 5). Forgetfulness of God is always accompanied with indifference to our soul's salvation: the goods of eternity appear to the avaricious as nothing compared with those of time. Hence it comes that many, according to the Apostle, by yielding to this passion, "have made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. i. 19).

The love of riches also inspires hardness of heart and insensibility to the miseries of the poor. God, the Sovereign Arbiter of the world, in the distribution which He has made of the goods of life, has, like a wise father of a family, so regulated the use of wealth for those who possess it, that a portion of it ought always to be set aside for the poor. But the avaricious man reverses this law of Divine Providence. He wrongs the poor, by withholding from him his bread; the naked, by denying him covering; the miserable, by refusing him the money which is due to him. He is without mercy. Thus, according to the wise man, he fills up the measure of his wickedness (Eccles.).

Finally, avarice is the parent source of deceit, injustice, robbery, and violence. He who is a slave to this passion, no longer regards good faith, honour, or right. He employs every means at his command, even the most criminal, to increase the treasure upon which he has set his heart. And what is more lamentable still, is that this passion grows and strengthens with the growth of years. Reflection and age tend to weaken the other passions; but avarice appears to be reanimated and to acquire new strength in proportion as life advances. O

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my God, how cruel is the passion of avarice! It has no pity for the soul, no pity for mankind, no pity for conscience.

II.—Punishment of Avarice.

Our Lord compares riches to thorns, and with reason, for they produce many more torments than joys. They lead man into a multitude of temptations and unceasing cares. They rob him of tranquillity and repose. What hardships to acquire them! What cares to preserve them! What bitter regrets when he loses them! But, Lord, one of the most terrible chastisements whereby Thou punishest this vice of cupidity, is the consequent blindness which renders it incorrigible. Alas! for those who are tainted with this evil, they will not admit they are its slaves. They justify themselves on the ground of necessity or prudence. Sometimes it is to raise a family to rank and respectability, at other times it is a fanciful future, whose chances may be fatal, and against which it is needful to provide. Avarice is a devouring fever, so much the more insensible the more violent it is. Moses beheld the sacred fire burning the bush without consuming it; on the other hand, the profane fire of cupidity consumes and devours the avaricious person, without appearing to burn him, at least in his own eyes.

And yet at the hour of death, what will remain to him of all the riches that he has accumulated with such great care? Nothing, absolutely nothing. He was born poor, he will die poor. Death will relieve him of

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all temporal goods, and will leave him only his good or evil deeds. He will carry with him nothing else. And will he not forfeit the treasures of heaven, if he has occupied himself only in acquiring those of earth? "What doth it profit a man," says our Lord, "if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.) Miser, thou wilt lose thy soul. Wretched man, hast thou not sold it to the devil during thy lifetime?—well, hell will not part with it at thy death. "The rich man died," says the Gospel—the rich man, that is, the covetous man, the man devoured by the love of riches—"and he was buried in hell" (Luke xvi. 20).

III.—Prayer.

What folly, O my God, to place one's affections in perishable goods, to multiply them without measure, to make one's happiness consist in them, to hoard them up without enjoying them! Is not a man truly blind, not to see how shameful and unreasonable this passion is? Alas! O Lord, I may fall myself into this excess, since others fall into it; I should not be less guilty than they, if Thy grace did not preserve me therefrom. Deign to grant me this grace, O my God! If Thou bestowest riches upon me, permit me not to set my heart upon them. Suffer me not to abuse them, by employing them to gratify my passions, living in softness and delights. It is Thy Will that they should be serviceable to my salvation, by becoming in my hands the resource of the poor; vouchsafe that I may cor-

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respond to the desires of Thy Providence by relieving their miseries; and to detach my heart efficaciously from them, grant that I may frequently call to mind the frightful maledictions spoken of in the Gospel against the rich who make not a holy use of Thy benefits, and the glorious recompense promised to those who employ their riches in alleviating the distressed. Amen.

EXAMINATION.

I. In what light have I till now viewed the things of this world? Is it as a secondary means for accomplishing the providential object of my life, or as the chief end towards which all my efforts converge? Have I regarded the kingdom of God and His justice as the *principal*, and the things of the world as the *accessory*?

II. Have I been wanting in confidence in the Providence of God, which feeds the birds of the air, clothes the lilies of the field, and promises to supply the necessities of every human creature? Have I sighed after immoderate riches, fabulous treasures, vast possessions? Do I not amuse myself with dreams of unlimited wealth?

III. Have I been guilty of sordid meanness, unseemly parsimony, with a view to increase my prosperity? Have I refused to the poor what my fortune and position prescribed me to give to them? When I have shared with them God's gifts, have I done it reluctantly, with repugnance, without delicacy?

IV. Have I neglected to pay my debts through avarice? Have I been wanting in fairness in buying

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or selling? Have I tried to deceive my neighbour to his prejudice? When I have found any article, have I carefully sought to discover the owner? Have I restored what I knew belonged to another?

V. Have I regretted to have Masses said for the deceased members of my family, or for the souls in purgatory generally? What sacrifices have I made for the propagation of the Faith and other pious works of Catholic charity?

Conclusion.—Practise almsdeeds from early childhood. Accustom yourselves early, and teach those whom you direct, to practise Christian liberality.

Spiritual Instruction.— God endowed St. Vincent with a great and generous soul, which led him at once to despise the goods of earth, and to pour them freely, when he could, into the lap of the poor. When quite a little child, he obtained in his family permission to distribute the alms, and he acquitted himself of that duty with a joy, prudence, and liberality very rare indeed. When he embraced the religious state, he joyfully abandoned his whole patrimony in favour of the poor. In his sermons he thundered with energy against avarice. "With St. Paul," said he, "we should count the goods of the earth as dung" (Phil. iii. 8). "Dung and other odours," added he, "become fatal if shut up, for they corrupt the air, and breed pestilence among the inhabitants; whereas, on the other hand, if spread on the fields, they become useful by communicating fertility to the land. Hoard up riches,"

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he concludes, "hoard up dung, and they will only serve to infect your soul by the irregular love of perishable goods. Cast them on the dry and barren soil, that is, dispense them to the poor, and they will bring forth, to your profit, the fruits of eternal life."

St. Vincent also preached strongly against injustice, the common root of cupidity, as will be seen by the following miracle, which he wrought in the Isle of Majorca.

While he sojourned in that island, a tavern-keeper one day went to ask him to preach on the obligation of the payment of debts; "for," said he, "I have given credit for several measures of wine, and cannot recover payment." "Very well," answered the Saint, "I shall say how guilty those are who keep what belongs to another; but first of all I should like to know what the wine is like which you sell." The man went for a bottle of wine to show him, and said: "Taste it, Father; you will see that it is of excellent quality." "Pour it on my scapular," said the Saint. "But I shall spoil your holy habit." "That concerns me; do what I tell you." What was the tavern-keeper's astonishment when he saw the contents of his bottle separate into two parts; that which was wine ran upon the ground; the other, which was water fraudently mixed with wine, remained on the scapular.

"My brother," exclaimed St. Vincent, "you desire that others should pay you what is due; but have not you injured many persons by selling them an adulterated article? and ought not you to repair that injury?"

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The tavern-keeper being greatly confused, confessed his fault, and made restitution to each of his customers whom he had overcharged. He speedily renounced his trade for ever, and entered the company of penitents who followed the Saint in his apostolic journeys.[1]

Litanies of the Saint.

FOURTH DAY.

THE VICE OF IMPURITY.

"*Hæc est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra, ut abstineatis vos a fornicatione: ut sciat unusquisque vestrum vas suum possidere in sanctificatione et honore, non in passione desiderii, sicut gentes quæ ignorant Deum;*" "This is the Will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from all fornication; that everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God" (1 Thess. iv. 3–5).

MEDITATION.

I.—The Disorder of the Vice of Impurity.

THIS abominable vice defiles in an instant both the soul that is purified by the Blood of the Son of God, and the body in which Jesus Christ deigns to repose in person as in a sacred tabernacle. But if it be an enormous crime to profane a material temple, what must it be to profane the living temple wherein God dwells substantially?

The sin of impurity is full of turpitude; it is even called by that name; it is the *shameful sin*. There is no vice which exhales a more offensive odour, or which is more hateful even in the eyes of the world, than this.

[1] Teoli. lib. i. Tratt. iii. c. 25.

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The very discourses which are preached on this subject can scarce escape the defilement of its foul breath. What, then, must be the effects produced in the soul and body by the sin itself? O man! let thyself be overcome by this passion, and thou mayest well blush with shame to find thyself on a level with the unclean beasts, the friend and equal of swine.

There would appear to be an almost necessary connection between an impure soul and every other vice; all are, so to speak, ready to obey his orders; all are prepared to serve him. To attain his impure purpose, the murderer sheds the blood of his rival; the perfidious wretch prepares his poisons; calumny is ingenious in inventing crimes; injustice is all-powerful in soliciting; the perjuror forswears himself; the sacrilegious hand is laid upon that which is most holy. It is the source and cause of a thousand horrors.

In fine, what fills up the measure of its malice is the scandal which frequently results from it to our neighbour—a sad circumstance which singularly aggravates the load that is on the conscience at the moment of death, "Whosoever shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me," says our Lord, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark ix. 41).

II.—Punishment of the Vice of Impurity.

The infected breath of this infamous passion leaves nothing intact in man. It robs him first of honour, the

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most precious of all temporal blessings. It then debilitates his bodily strength, dulls the freshness of beauty, enfeebles temperament, ruins health, engenders cruel disorders, withers before its time the flower of youth, and brings on unseasonably a precocious and ignoble old age. It blunts the vigour of the soul, and impresses it with a sort of brutishness; it dries up in the heart the source of virtuous sentiments, it imparts to it a disrelish for noble exercises; by it youth is precipitated into folly, and old age is filled with misery and shame.

St. Bonaventure discovered an anticipated hell in souls addicted to this ignominious vice. A raging fire devours them,—it is concupiscence; a horrible stench accompanies them,—it is the infamy, which cannot be concealed at least from itself, although it may be dexterous enough to divest it of its turpitude in the eyes of the multitude.

The vice of impurity is its own punishment by reason of its insatiability. In vain does man sacrifice his thoughts and feelings to it, it only renders the passion more unquiet, more exacting. The more he abandons himself to voluptuousness, the less satisfaction does he feel. It is a food which irritates the desires instead of appeasing them. It is an unquenchable fire; it slackens only to be soon reanimated with fresh ardour.

Reflect well on this, my soul; the pleasure which is drawn from this poisoned source is short, the punishment which will follow it, will be eternal. How often has not our Lord struck with sudden death, while in the very act of this crime, the unhappy people who commit

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it! Oh, "how frightful a thing it is to fall (in that state) into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). Guard, then, O sinner, against exposing thyself to this peril by continuing to live according to the flesh, and not according to the purity of God's law. For a mere gliding enjoyment, expose not thyself to interminable punishment. For one hour of miserable voluptuousness, sacrifice not the joy of a good conscience on earth and the glory of victory in heaven.

III.—Prayer.

Have pity on me, O Lord, have pity on me. I know that purity is a special gift of Thy goodness. Despite my unworthiness, "God of my fathers, and Lord of mercy, Who hast made all things with Thy word" (Wisdom ix. 1), I venture to ask it of Thee. "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me" (Psalm lxix). "Lord, save me, I perish" (Matt. viii. 25). Suffer not that anything should tarnish the purity of my body and soul; attach me inviolably to this beautiful virtue which makes us resemble Thee, which unites us to Thee, O God of purity! Yes, whatever it may cost me, I desire to recover, I desire to preserve, and henceforth to inviolably guard this treasure so precious; I desire carefully to avoid all that may threaten it, all that may place it in danger. With Thy grace, O God, shall I not be able to do what so many innocent souls do who glorify Thee in their bodies by repressing their passions? I will invoke Thee then,

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dear Lord, I will unceasingly implore Thee either to screen me from temptations, or to give me strength to surmount them. Inspire me, I beseech Thee, with a salutary fear, and render impotent the efforts of the enemy of my salvation to destroy me. Grant that I may use the means, which Thy holy law teaches me, to fight this arduous battle, and to come out of it victorious. Amen.

EXAMINATION.

I. Have I distrusted myself? Have I feared my instability? Have I fled the occasions of evil? Have I on the contrary, sought after them?

II. How have I acted in temptations that relate to this delicate matter? Have I, as soon as an unchaste thought has risen in my mind, striven to repress it? Have I had recourse to humble, attentive, and fervent prayer, to rid myself of it? Have I delighted in those foul imaginations? Have I voluntarily tasted of a guilty pleasure? Have I forgotten the presence of God and His angels? Have I suffered myself to be enslaved to evil?

III. Have I put a restraint upon my looks, my words, my conversation? Have I been led by prurient curiosity to attend immoral lectures, to frequent doubtful localities, or to pay dangerous visits? Have I exposed my soul by assisting at balls, dancings, and the assemblies of worldlings?

IV. Have I contracted any fatal friendship calculated to lead me to destruction? Have I shunned the com-

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pany of persons of the opposite sex? Have I, on the contrary, loved to frequent it? In my necessary relations with them, have I kept within the limits of prudent discretion?

V. Have I frequently entertained myself with thoughts of my last end? Have I always employed myself in some useful occupation? Have I been temperate in my meals, attentive to repose, moderate in the use of the things of life?

VI. Have I frequently approached the Sacrament of Penance? Have I humbly and modestly accused myself of my faults? Have I reaped therefrom a lively horror of evil, and an exact vigilance over my conduct? Have I appreciated the immense benefits of Holy Communion, and taken sufficient measures to receive it as often as possible?

Conclusion.—Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation, or that you may conquer.

Spiritual Instruction.—Our amiable Saint was truly an angel of purity. We have seen the great love he manifested towards this virtue and the admirable battles which he victoriously fought in its defence. We shall briefly advert to a remarkable victory of which we have hitherto had no occasion to speak. A wretched woman, who conceived an unholy passion towards the Saint, feigned to be ill; and having sent for him, attempted to entice him to sin. St. Vincent came out of the conflict victoriously; but in punishment of her attempted sacrilege, the woman became possessed by the evil spirit.

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The Saint delivered her from her obsession and inspired her with a sincere repentance. In his sermons, in order to show the enormity of the vice of impurity, he usually made use of the following comparison: "It would be," he observed, "an execrable crime to cast a picture of Christ our Lord into the mire. Yet, they who are addicted to impurity are guilty of no less a wickedness by sinking into the slime of carnal passions their souls, which are the images of God in a more perfect manner than are the paintings which represent the Saviour of man."

During his public life, modesty shone forth in a special manner in the whole exterior of our Saint. And it possessed, observes his biographer, three singular prerogatives. The first was a celestial odour which exhaled from his virginal body. One of his disciples deposed in the process of his canonisation, that having for some time enjoyed the privilege and honour of helping him to mount and get off the humble beast which bore him from place to place, he had smelt a delicious fragrance from his hands, which was incomparably sweeter than any earthly perfume. He attributed this odour to his inestimable purity, and it was so powerful, so penetrating, that he perceived it not only as soon as he touched the Saint's hands, but even for many days afterwards on his own body.

The second prerogative was that the simple touch of his hands or even his religious habit cured the sick, imparted sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and motion to the paralysed.

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The third and the most beautiful was that his look, like that of the Immaculate Virgin, put to flight unchaste affections in the hearts of those who beheld him. It was enough for him to fix his eyes on those who were affected by this vice, to inspire them suddenly with a marvellous love of purity and an extraordinary horror of everything contrary thereto. The process of his canonisation supports this beautiful truth. His mere glance, his grave and modest looks, were fiery darts which inflamed corrupted hearts with a love of this angelic virtue, and effectually won them to a complete change of life.[1] Frequently contemplate in spirit this prodigy of purity, and you will likewise be inflamed with a desire to practise this sublime virtue.

The Litanies of the Saint.

FIFTH DAY.

THE VICE OF ANGER.

"*Ne sis velox ad irascendum, quia ira in sinu stulti requiescit;*" "Be not quickly angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool" (Eccles. xvii. 10).

MEDITATION.

I.—The Disorder of Anger.

LET us, my soul, distinguish anger from indignation. The latter sometimes leads man to reprehend with severity what sweetness is unable to correct. Such is the anger of a father or a master at the sight of disorders which he is obliged to oppose.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 10.

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Our Lord Himself was moved by this anger when He chased from the temple those who violated its sanctity. But anger, which is a mortal sin, is very different; consider this well, my soul. It is an impetuous movement of the heart which impels it to repulse what is displeasing to it.

The malice of its principle is the proof of its excess. Whence springs anger? From a tyrannical and disordered passion which is roused by encountering an obstacle. The proud man, for example, flies into a passion against that which wounds his vanity or his ambition: the avaricious man is irritated when an accident deranges his project of gain; the voluptuous man is indignant when his pleasures are traversed. Is this sentiment according to God? Is it according to right reason? Clearly not. It brings trouble to the soul, and the disorder which it produces therein, is painted on the countenance and the whole exterior of him who yields to it. The eyes are inflamed, the voice is oppressed, the whole body trembles, he no longer knows himself, he is not in possession of his reason, he cares for nothing. How can a passion which thus troubles the serenity of heart and body be excusable?

Anger, if not promptly repressed, ends by changing man into a ferocious beast. Then, his mouth vomits forth abuse, outrage, slander, calumny, imprecations, blasphemies. Nothing is sacred to his impious tongue. From words he passes to violence; the most revolting cruelties hardly suffice to satisfy his vengeance, to quench his rage.

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Let us early accustom ourselves to master this passion. For unless we know how to bridle it, it will revolt against us, and drag us on to excess, of which we shall one day have reason to repent. What is most lamentable in it, is that it scarce leaves us room to perceive the evil which we do under its influence. To an angry man, every kind of vengeance appears just; his reason is sometimes so obscured by it, that he mistakes for the zeal of justice what is the simple effect of anger, and vice is adorned in his eyes with all the colours of virtue. What Solomon says in regard to wine upsetting the reason of wise men, might also well be said of every vehement passion. Like treacherous liquors, anger blinds the reason, without any excuse to him who yields to it.

II.—Punishments of Anger.

Let us consider how mischievous this vice is to the soul and body of him who does not check it. It inflames the blood, agitates the heart, shocks the nerves and brain. This momentary folly, if not carefully repressed, will sometimes result in chronic disorder. Its paroxysms destroy the mind and even life itself. "Envy and anger shorten a man's days," says the wise man (Eccles. xxx. 26).

Let us further consider how destructive this vice is of the tranquillity of families, societies, and people. It engenders a multitude of quarrels, lawsuits, resentments. Harshness gains nothing among men; it wounds, it repels. Do we not carefully avoid contact

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with thorns and thistles? Is the hedgehog caressed? Does not sweetness, on the contrary, gain conquest over the hearts of men? Does it not evoke sympathies, kind words and deeds?—"A passionate man stirreth up strifes: he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up" (Prov. xv. 18). "Blessed are the meek," says our Lord, "for they shall possess the land" (Matt. v. 4); that is, they shall be the masters of reasonable creatures.

Let us, in fine, consider how our Lord detests this vice. The emotions of anger drive Him from the hearts of those who are its victims. While hatred dwells in a soul, it cannot offer Him an agreeable sacrifice. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 23, 24). Thus speaks our Lord.

At the judgment-seat of God, the vindictive and passionate man shall be severely punished, "Whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . . And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire" (Matt. v. 22). This Divine Preceptor frequently repeats to us that the manner in which we act towards others will be the measure and rule that will be applied to ourselves, and that if we have not dealt mercifully towards our brethren, He will show no mercy to us. Let all these considerations then break down the unruly movements of anger in our hearts, and inspire us with Gospel meekness.

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III.—Prayer.

I acknowledge, O my God, that I frequently abandon myself to impatience, that I revolt at the least contradiction; by yielding so often to anger, I run the risk of contracting the habit of this dangerous passion. Yes, I feel the necessity of overcoming my natural impetuosity, and forming in myself early habits of patience. I have my faults, and I am pleased when others bear with them; it is but just, then, that I also should support those of my brethren. Why should I, O my God, feel such repugnance in observing a law which Thou hast taught me both by Thy word and example? Why should I be so sensitive to a slight contempt when I behold Thee suffering the blackest calumnies, the most cruel outrages with an unalterable patience, and submitting without the least plaint to the frightful punishment of the Cross? O Jesus, God of peace! O Jesus, meek and humble of heart! Thou commandest me to imitate Thy meekness, help me to reform my impetuous nature. Grant that I may never render evil for evil; and that after Thy example, I may remain silent when injurious words are uttered against me. Thou declarest those blessed who are meek. Thou callest them children of God who love and counsel peace. Impart to me, O God, this peaceful character, this meek and gentle disposition, which Thou desirest to find in all Thy children. Amen.

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EXAMINATION.

I. How do I receive contradictions? Do they disgust me? Do I at once express the sadness which fills my heart? Do I, on the contrary, give way to murmurings, resentment, anger, bitterness, impatience?

II. Have I easily pardoned the annoyance that others have caused me? Have I treasured in my heart a remembrance of the injuries they have done me? Have I entertained feelings of coldness, aversion, spite, anger, bitterness, revenge against those who I suppose have offended me?

III. Have I made known to others the contradictions that I have suffered? Do I complain of such to them? Have I manifested my discontent and annoyance very often?

IV. Have I done all in my power to avoid what was likely to lead to contention and dispute? Have I been desirous of deferring to the opinions of others rather than contradict them? If perchance, I have felt it my duty to resist, have I always done it with suitable discretion?

V. When ridiculed by others, have I indulged in rude and satirical repartee, or even used threatening words and gestures?

VI. Have I suffered myself to be overcome by feelings of antipathy against persons with whom I am obliged to live? Have I repulsed them? Have I willingly listened to them? Have I received them kindly? Have I dis-

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missed them without having satisfied them when it was in my power to do so?

VII. Have I spoken harshly when correcting and reproving others, and is this manner of acting habitual with me? Have I always been kind, meek, polite, affable, obliging, always ready to do a service, bearing with, lessening or excusing the faults of others?

Conclusion.—Live in peace with all men by bearing with their defects.

Spiritual Instruction.—The meekness of St. Vincent Ferrer was ever unalterable. He was attacked on every side by persons who were jealous of his popularity. They treated him as a hypocrite, a false prophet, a preacher of fables and foolish things, a vagabond. They declared that he had entered on the work of his wonderful apostolate only to bid adieu to the solitude of his cell, to withdraw himself from obedience to his superiors, that he might gain access to the courts of princes, and be venerated by peoples. He carefully concealed all these calumnies; he patiently bore them with calmness of heart and countenance, and never alluded to them in his discourses. This meekness and patience might have seemed to belong to his natural disposition rather than to virtue, if, on the other hand, he had not displayed the energy of his character by the vehement denunciations which he hurled at vice from the pulpit.

It was by this forgetfulness of himself that he succeeded in converting an old man who was sunk in the mire of impurity. In vain had he frequently sought to

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induce this man to change his life, who, instead of correcting himself, became his enemy and unrelenting persecutor. He availed himself of every means to calumniate and blacken his reputation. The Saint's patience shone forth so much the more the longer that the anger and vexation of the other lasted. But thanks be to God, what the Saint failed to obtain by his exhortations and prayers, he gained by his meekness. In the end, the old man, astonished at so much mildness, was converted; and, what rarely happens, he abandoned in his old age the vices of youth, which had grown old with him.

Whence came this heroic patience of St. Vincent? From the idea which he had formed of contradictions. He viewed them as occasions of merit sent by God Himself. An ingenious parable, which he sometimes used in his sermons, gives us an insight to this.

"A certain king," said he, "imprisoned two persons who owed him a large sum of money. As they had nothing wherewith to pay him, he one day threw a purse of gold at one of them, which struck him on the back. The latter, irritated at the blow he received, took no notice of the purse and its contents. Then the king threw a similar purse at the other prisoner, hitting him on the arm, without causing him pain. He immediately seized the treasure which was given to him, thanked his benefactor, and with the sum thus supplied him paid his debts and left the prison. The first person," continued the Saint, "is the impatient and irascible man; the second is he who is meek and patient.

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We are all in this world as in a prison, and are debtors to God, on account of our sins. Unable to pay our debts, God, in His mercy, sends us the gold of patience in the purse of contradiction and tribulation. He who knows not how to profit by it, runs the risk of failing to discharge his debts to God; while he who, on the contrary, avails himself of it by sweetly submitting to what is unpleasant, pays his debts, frees himself from the prison of this life and all its miseries, present and future, and attains, moreover, to eternal glory."[1] Meditate on this beautiful exhortation, and put it in practice.

The Litanies of the Saint.

SIXTH DAY.

THE VICE OF GLUTTONY.

"*Attendite vobis, ne forte graventur corda vestra in crapula et ebrietate;*" "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness" (Luke xxi. 34).

I.—Disorder of Gluttony.

Is it forbidden to feel pleasure in eating or drinking? No. By a wise foresight, God has imparted a relish to what is necessary to sustain life. Unhappily, we abuse this benefit when we seek only the pleasure it affords. Reason itself tells us that it is needful to eat and drink in order to live, and not to gratify sensuality. Besides, the satisfaction which is felt in food and drink should be regulated with

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 16.

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a view to our bodily strength, in such a way that we may be enabled to fulfil our duties and to serve God, according to these words of the Apostle, "Whether you eat or drink . . . do all for the glory of God." To have any other motive in view, to seek merely the pleasure of the senses, is to be guilty of gluttony; it is, according to the same Apostle, to make a god of one's belly. It is a vice unworthy of man. What a dishonour, then, to a rational being, to allow himself to be governed by sensuality, instead of repressing its unruly movements! If such a vice be unworthy of man, it is still more so of a Christian, who should regard food as medicine, and not as a means for gratifying the sensual appetite. He should imitate the mortifications of his Divine Master, Who, apart from His fast in the desert, submitted His Sacred Flesh to painful conflicts, not only to heal our evils, but also to serve us as a model.

See, my soul, how dangerous a vice this is. It begets contempt of the laws of the Church, for when a person is under its dominion, he is but little disposed to observe the fasts and abstinence prescribed by ecclesiastical authority. He is incapable of mortifying himself; certain privations appear to him an insupportable burden; he labours to find out pretexts for being dispensed therefrom; and in the end is led not only to violate the precept of fasting, but even to use without scruple foods that are strictly prohibited.

What must we think of the vice of intemperance in drinking? This, alas, is a disorder which we blush to name, which destroys reason, that essential attribute of

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humanity—a horrible excess which debases man, and lowers him beneath the condition of the beast.

II.—Punishments of the Vice of Gluttony.

This vice clouds the soul, degrades the mind, brutalises the heart, ruins the health, and shortens life. "Gluttony," said an ancient writer, "kills more people than the sword." Strange result! that which was intended to maintain health, becomes the means of its destruction.

Gluttony exposes its slave to the danger of being abandoned by God at the hour of death. He will be surprised by the stroke of death without being prepared for it. For the sake of a pleasure which is as short in its duration as it is limited by the organ which it affects, man suffers himself to be plunged headlong into the abyss of hell, where all the organs of the body must expiate the disorders of one. The sensual man exhausts himself to saturate with delights a body that will shortly become the food of worms. Unhappy man! he allows his soul to languish through want, which must one day appear at the tribunal of the Most High, where it will find itself necessarily shorn of virtue and merit. Will its reprobation be less because the body has been glutted with the daintiest food? And will the body itself escape punishment? Created for the soul, will its lot be different from that of the soul? Will it not share its chastisement? By flattering the less noble of the two substances which constitute thy being, O man!

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thou exposest thyself to lose both. Thou becomest the murderer of thy own flesh, which was given thee to serve the soul; thou makest it the instrument of its death; thou subjectest both to the same punishments by making them the accomplices of the same disorders. Call to mind poor Lazarus. He would have gladly contented himself with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; but there was no one who would bestow them on him. He died, and was speedily borne by angel hands into Abraham's bosom. The rich voluptuary, clothed in purple and fine linen, also died, and he was buried in hell. In vain did he cry out for a single drop of water to quench the thirst that devoured him. That drop of water was refused him; it will be denied him to all eternity! (Luke xvi.) But sensuality and abstinence cannot share the same lot: at death, misery succeeds pleasure, and pleasure succeeds misery.

III.—Prayer.

It is to Thy paternal goodness, O my God! that we are indebted for all the necessaries of life, and Thou bestowest them on us to sustain and repair our strength. If Thou attachest a certain pleasure to the use of food, it is only a wise condescension on Thy part. Thou doest this that we may feel no repugnance for the nourishment of which we have need. But to use it solely for the pleasure which it affords, to exceed the bounds of necessity and decency, is a crying abuse; for we thereby turn Thy benefits against Thee, and employ

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in offending Thee that which ought to excite our gratitude. Permit not, O my God! that I should ever be guilty of this crime. Grant that I may use, as becomes a Christian, the food which Thy Providence hath provided, by never yielding to excess, nor seeking to please the palate, but only to find therein what is suitable to the wants of life. Preserve me from being seduced by the gross vice of gluttony. Suffer not sensuality to assume the voice of nature, that it may the more easily deceive me by seeming to solicit only what is legitimately and indispensably necessary. Keep me always on my guard against the attractions of pleasure. Make me faithful in the exact observance of the laws of Thy holy Church, which she prescribes for her children in regard to fasting, abstinence, and mortification of the senses. In a word, let my flesh be ever submissive to my soul, and my soul always subject to Thee. Amen.

EXAMINATION.

I. Do I frequently entertain myself with the thought of what I may eat or drink, in order to gratify sensuality? Have I felt a pleasure in calling to mind the delights of the table which I have experienced on former occasions? Am I fond of speaking of such things with others?

II. Have I eaten or drunk out of meals, without necessity or reason, solely for the sake of pleasure? Have I also done this before the hour of repast, without any other motive?

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III. Have I shown a daintiness in, or repugnance to, certain kinds of food? Have I eagerly sought after that which was agreeable to the taste? Have I eaten too quickly? Have I exceeded the bounds of moderation? Have my excesses been attended with injury to my health?

IV. Have I, by a spirit of immortification, disregarded the laws of fasting and abstinence imposed by the Church on her children? Have I never been deceived on this point? Have I employed unworthy means to obtain certain dispensations? Have I made amends by alms-deeds, prayer, and other good works, such as are usually imposed on the faithful?

V. Have I been careful to sanctify my meals with prayer, before and after? When drinking even a cup of cold water, have I been observant in making at least the sign of the Cross?

VI. Have I taken care during my meals, to raise from time to time my heart towards God? Have I thought of leaving a portion of my food for our Lord in the person of the poor?

Conclusion.—Never allow a Friday to pass without practising some act of mortification at meals.

Spiritual Instruction.—St. Vincent was always an example of moderation in his meals. We do not speak of his life in the Convent, where the rule of the Order is already so severe. Let us admire rather his extraordinary mortification in the midst of his missions, notwithstanding the fatigues of his apostolate.

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The Saint took but one meal a day, and that at mid-day. He was satisfied with one dish only, the first that was put upon the table. It was not that provisions were wanting; for his hosts were ever eager to serve him abundantly; but he was pleased to content himself with a little, and caused the rest to be given to the poor.

He never ate flesh-meat. Fish and vegetables were his sole diet. When these were wanting, he was satisfied with a little bread, and water scarcely coloured with wine.

At night when it was not a fast, he ate only a few leaves of lettuce.

He was careful to have the Holy Scriptures read to him by one of his companions or disciples during the repast.

Despite those rigorous fasts and abstinences, our Saint lived to a ripe old age. Thus, did he verify in his own person the doctrine which he preached. "The rich," said he, "live but a short time, because they eat too much; the multiplicity of the foods which they indulge in is injurious to their health. Of two persons of equal condition, the one mortified, and the other sensual, the first will live considerably longer than the second." To show this he alleges the following reason. "The food which we take, as for example bread and wine, is corruptible; consequently the body, already corruptible by its nature, receives a fresh degree of corruptibility by the assimilation of food. It follows, thence, that persons nourished with a superabundant

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and luxurious diet, corrupt their bodies and die very much sooner." [1]

Imprint these maxims of St. Vincent on your memory, and let them animate you to live in temperance and sobriety.

Litanies of the Saint.

SEVENTH DAY.

THE VICE OF ENVY.

"*Invidiâ diaboli mors introivit in orbem terrarum: imitantur autem illum, qui sunt ex parte illius;*" "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world: and they follow him that are of his side" (Wisdom ii. 24, 25).

MEDITATION.

I.—Disorder of Envy.

WHAT is envy? A sorrow that is felt at the sight of the gifts and good-fortune of others. The envious person is an enemy of his superiors, because he cannot equal them; of his inferiors, because they desire to rise to his level; of his equals, because they claim to take precedence of him. It was envy that animated Saul against David; that stirred up the Pharisees against our Lord, even to putting Him to death; for such is the rage of this monster that it pardons no one, however high and exalted his position. Alas! this is one of the vices whose empire is spread far and wide. It moves noiselessly in secret,

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. iii. c. 16.

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heaping up ruins, sparing nothing, respecting nothing, and striving by preference to persecute the good, their talents, and their virtues. And can anything be conceived more odious than envy?

The envious, says the Holy Spirit Himself, resemble the devil. Like him, they are less desirous of acquiring the advantages they are jealous of, than of seeing others deprived of them. They regard the good that results to others as an evil to themselves, the success of others as a loss which they sustain, the good repute of others as a stain which tarnishes them. Miserable beings! they are made worse by that which renders their neighbours better, they aggravate their poverty by that which increases the wealth of the latter.

Envy is essentially opposed to charity. Charity shares a neighbour's sufferings, envy rejoices and triumphs over them. Charity conceals a neighbour's defects, envy defames him by calumniatory speech. It strives to obscure his reputation; it lessens, as far as in it lies, the good that is said of him; it maliciously interprets all his actions; it turns the purest virtues into vices. Charity, far from injuring a neighbour, strives to serve him by every means in its power. Envy does just the contrary. From words it proceeds to acts; it thwarts all his designs; it resorts to a thousand ways to give him pain, to prevent him from attaining the object of his desires, or to deprive him of it, if he has already gained it. It is capable of the greatest excess, of the utmost violence.

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II.—Punishments of Envy.

There is no passion that is more directly the instrument of its own punishment than that of envy. It consumes the heart, dries up the flesh, torments the mind, disturbs the peace of conscience, embitters life, and banishes from the soul every joy and contentment. Like the insect that gnaws the tree which has engendered it, envy becomes the torture of the heart that has conceived it. But it soon also exhibits its ravages from without, and the expression of the countenance clearly indicates the deep wounds within. Envy has not a more severe judge than itself; hence some of the Fathers call it a *just passion*; not that there is any rectitude in it, for it is an infamous vice, but because it is its own executioner, executing justice on itself. The Holy Scripture gives us clearly to understand how fatal are its effects on the soul and body, when it says: "Envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs xiv. 30). St. Bonaventure says that it is to the soul what the worm is to the wood and the garment, and rust to steel. St. Basil compares it to an arrow which, shot against a rock, rebounds and strikes the archer with his own dart; he also likens it to the offspring of the viper, which tear the mother's entrails in giving them birth.

Now, if the Son of God will one day act with such severity towards those who have refused merely the ordinary helps of life to their neighbour, how will He deal with the envious who have been hostile to their brethren? What you did to the least among men, He

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will say, you did unto Me. You were jealous of Me, by your calumnies you defamed Me, you opposed Me, you ruined Me, you put Me to death. Children of Satan, whose rivals and imitators you have been, depart from Me, Who am charity and love itself; you shall have no place in My kingdom, which is the assembly of hearts that are united by the bonds of love. Go into everlasting fire, you who burn with the infernal flames of envy; go into that fire which was prepared for him who is the demon of envy. As you have imitated him in his sentiments and acts, so now take part with him in his punishment.

III.—Prayer.

Preserve me, O my God, from envy, that vice so odious in Thy sight, and so fatal to him who yields himself to it. Yes, I detest and renounce it for ever. By the help of Divine grace, I will endeavour to stifle its first movements when they rise within my breast. I will give place in my heart to sentiments that are conformable to reason and faith; the blessings and misfortunes of my brethren shall be common to myself and to them, I will share their joys and their sorrows. Far from depreciating the good qualities that they possess, my heart shall be moved only to a worthy emulation; I will strive to imitate whatever is good in them. The sight of their talents shall excite me to cultivate those with which Thou hast gifted me; the virtues which I discover in them shall animate me to practise them

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myself. If they succeed better than I, I will not be grieved, for Thou requirest only the effort on my part, not success. I will even rejoice therein, because, by sharing the happiness of my brethren, I shall draw down Thy blessing on my endeavours, and shall myself merit some success. Make me understand, O my God, that there is no loss to me in the merits of my neighbour, whatever they may be, and that, on the contrary, his advancement is my gain, seeing that Divine grace renders the treasure of good works and merits common to all Christians. Amen.

EXAMINATION.

I. Envy proceeds from pride and ambition. Have I an exaggerated notion of my personal worth? Have I aspired to any superiority?

II. Another source of envy is a disorderly affection for the things of this world. Have I preferred the heritage of heaven and spiritual wealth to the goods of fortune? Have I viewed without pain my neighbour's prosperity? Do I rejoice in the blessings which Providence has bestowed upon him?

III. Self-love, in fine, is the secret root of envy. Have I to reproach myself with feelings of egotism? Have I carefully suppressed them when they sprung up in my soul?

IV. Have I never manifested a spirit of envy in my conversation, by lowering the merits of others? Have I never shown ill-will towards those who display a

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greater genius, more talent, more virtue than myself, and who meet with greater sympathy from those with whom we live? Have I never adroitly alluded to their defects in order to gratify the resentment caused by the praise that is bestowed on them?

V. Have I gone even further, by forming rash judgments, spreading false reports, undermining their reputation, using a thousand indirect, equivocal, and criminal means to injure their interests?

VI. Have I, through envy, wished evil to my neighbour? Do I rejoice in his misfortunes? To what degree does my dislike of him carry me?

Conclusion.—Bear not envy towards any one, but strive to imitate those who distinguish themselves by their estimable qualities.

Spiritual Instruction.—Instead of opening your heart to this detestable vice of jealousy, make every effort to plant therein the opposite virtue, that is, a Christian affection, which will render you sensible to the blessings and misfortunes of your fellow-beings, and enable you to participate in them. This is charity, that virtue which the Gospel so strongly inculcates. The amiable St. Vincent possessed it in an eminent degree. He identified himself with his neighbour, rejoicing with those who rejoiced, and sorrowing with those who were afflicted. He exhibited an extraordinary sweetness, benignity, and affability towards all. God endowed him with a heart so tender, that he could not restrain his tears and emotion at beholding the misfortunes of

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others. The words of compassion which fell from his lips were so touching, and the expression of his countenance was so sympathetic, that the mere sight of him, or the sound of his voice, was enough to tranquillise troubled souls, and to dispel sorrow from their hearts.

But if the Saint himself never yielded to the vile passion of jealousy, there were those who became its victims on his account. Yet, Providence failed not to avenge the contradictions which that unquiet spirit stirred up against him.

St. Vincent, preaching one Easter-day in the Cathedral at Toulouse, said that the Saviour of the world, on rising from the tomb, appeared first to His glorious Mother, an opinion which is commonly held by the Fathers. Another preacher, hearing these words, disapproved of the Saint's doctrine, saying that he affirmed as true what was mere conjecture, and that he ought to confine himself to the bare text of the Gospel. He went even further: in his false zeal and presumption, he announced that he would preach in the evening, to refute publicly what St. Vincent had said. This gave rise to a grave scandal in Toulouse. At the appointed hour a crowd of persons assembled to hear the sermon which had been announced with so much vanity; but when the rash preacher ascended the pulpit, he was unable to utter a single word. The people saw in this unexpected silence the just chastisement of God. He descended from the pulpit covered with such confusion that he was obliged to quit the city of Toulouse.

Another preacher, as ill-disposed as the former, was

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nevertheless better inspired than he. His defiance was speedily changed into admiration. He recognised in the language of St. Vincent that of the Holy Spirit. "For otherwise," said he, "it would be impossible for this man to touch the hearts of his auditory so efficaciously, and to explain with such lucidity the intricacies of speculative theology."[1] Let us divest ourselves of self-love, and show forth in our intercourse with men goodwill and friendship towards them.

Litanies of the Saint.

EIGHTH DAY.

THE VICE OF SLOTH.

"*Multam malitiam docuit otiositas;*" "Idleness hath taught much evil" (Eccles. xxxiii. 29).

MEDITATION.

I.—Disorder of Sloth.

SLOTH is an indolence, a weariness which unnerves us for work, and especially spiritual works.

It is an ogre which devours by pure waste, time, that precious treasure which God has commanded us to improve during the short space of our trial on earth. There is not in this vast universe a single being that should be in a state of repose. In the heavens, the sun and moon and stars and all the luminous bodies incessantly perform their diurnal revolution for our use; on earth the

[1] Valdecebro, Percin Teoli, lib. i. Tratt. iii. c. 30.

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trees and plants labour without relaxation for their nutrition and development. The ant stores up in summer the grain that is to sustain its existence during the inclement season; the bee composes its honeycomb: in a word, all that has life and movement is in labour and activity. What a dishonour, then, for man, endowed with reason, to live in a state of idleness and sloth, which all creatures, by the simple instinct of their nature, have a horror of!

What follows from this? The most sacred duties are neglected. The laws of religion are not complied with; prayer is omitted or imperfectly performed; the sacraments are abandoned or received without due preparation. The obligations of one's state are no better discharged; nothing is done that is prescribed, or it is done badly, without attention, without application.

This is not all: activity being an essential characteristic of our nature, if not applied to what is good and useful, will necessarily conduce to evil; evil inclinations will assume the empire over it. "Be always doing something," said St. Jerome, "that the devil may ever find you occupied." "Idleness," adds the Angelic St Thomas, "is the chief hook with which hell fishes for souls." Thus, an uncultivated soil naturally brings forth thorns and thistles." "I passed by the field of the slothful man . . . . . and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down (Prov. xxiv. 30, 31).

The field of the slothful man is his own soul; the

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noxious weeds are bad thoughts, evil instincts, reprehensible acts; the thorns are sinful deeds; the broken-down wall is the door of the soul, open to all the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Let us then carefully avoid the vice of sloth.

II.—Punishments of Sloth.

Besides the ignominy, poverty, and distress, which it frequently engenders in the temporal order, this vice even exposes the soul to the loss of God's friendship, and renders it so hateful to Him, that He is constrained to cast it from His presence and to deprive it of all His gifts. A striking proof of this is the Bishop of Ephesus, to whom our Lord said by the mouth of St. John: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen: and do penance, and do the first works. Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place" (Apoc. ii. 4, 5). Another example is that of the Bishop of Laodicea, to whom our Lord spoke thus: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. iii. 15, 16). The misfortunes of a tepid and slothful soul need not surprise us. Sloth is an imperceptible worm which gnaws by degrees every virtue in the soul. The same thing occurs to a tepid soul as to rotten and worm-eaten wood, which to all appearance is sound, but

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which is frequently broken by the first pressure that is put upon it.

Woe to the tepid, slothful soul at the hour of death! It will be beyond the reach of succour. "Because of the cold the sluggard would not plough," says the Holy Spirit, that is, he would not apply himself to virtue, because of the difficulties that surround it. "He shall beg therefore in the summer," namely at the hour of death, in the heat of fever and anguish. "And it shall not be given him" (Prov. xx. 4); God and His angels will withhold from him every assistance, despite his entreaties. Is not this the very extreme of misfortune?

Not having produced, not even at the hour of death, any fruit worthy of eternal life, the barren soul, after a rigorous judgment, shall be cast, like a withered and unfruitful tree, into eternal flames. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit," says our Lord, "shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire" (Matt. vii. 19). Elsewhere it is said: "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxv. 30). Strive, O my soul, to escape that terrible lot, by diligently applying thyself to thy duties.

III.—Prayer.

O Lord, Thou hast commanded man to labour, and he swerves from the order which Thou hast established when he yields to sloth and spends his time in idleness or in frivolous amusements. Thou hast accorded him this

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time solely that he may employ it profitably, and Thou wilt one day demand a rigorous account of the use he shall have made of it. Woe to the barren tree! Woe to the unprofitable, indolent, slothful servant! Permit not, O Lord, that I fall into this deplorable misfortune. Grant me grace to spend the years of my life from this moment to the end in the faithful observance of Thy law. Make me diligent in the performance of my duties, with a view to please Thee, and to work out my salvation. Preserve me, O my God, from weariness of spirit and a dislike for spiritual things. Facilitate my application to what is good, that I may find a relish and sweetness therein. Sustain my courage, suffer me not to lose one moment of time so short and precious which Thy Providence bestows upon me. Grant me the dispositions of that holy man, who said each time that he heard the clock strike: "Lord, my God, one hour more is passed, of which I shall have to render Thee an account as well as of all those which Thou hast still in store for me." Yes, grant me, O God, these happy dispositions, for he who shall persevere to the end shall be saved. Amen.

EXAMINATION.

I. Have I regarded the graces which God has heaped upon me as a talent which He has confided to me, and which I ought to have turned to a profitable account? Have not I, like the servant in the Gospel, hid this talent, by receiving grace into my soul without producing fruit therein?

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II. Have I never resembled the barren fig-tree which bore only leaves, by contenting myself with the mere external fulfilment of the duties of my state, without either fervour or zeal?

III. When I have been moved to correct some fault, to advance in the practice of virtue, to perform my religious exercises with fidelity, have I not neglected those good inspirations? Have I not also heedlessly resisted the interior warnings which invited me to avoid certain acts, to withhold such and such words, to overcome this or that fault?

IV. In what manner do I approach the Sacraments? Have I received them tepidly, through custom, without deriving from them any fruit for my spiritual advancement?

V. When God's spirit has moved me to lead a more perfect life, have I adopted the most suitable means for carrying out my good resolutions? Do I not speedily fall back again into the same habits, by not doing sufficient violence to my evil propensities in order to correct them?

VI. Have I a rule to live by? Have I deliberately, and through my own fault, omitted any point of it? Have I never neglected what appears to me of little importance, or what is not to my taste? Have I never retrenched some portion of the time consecrated to prayer, spiritual reading, and the other exercises of the interior life? Has not a repugnance to these led me to seek pretexts for dispensing myself from them? And when I do perform them, is it not with languor, indifference, and through mere custom?

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VII. Has my fidelity to them been constant and generous, especially when grace was less sensibly present within me, and when it required a greater effort of the will to persevere in the accomplishment of my duties?

Conclusion. Let us examine every evening how we have observed our rule, and impose on ourselves a penance for the faults committed.

Spiritual Instruction. Let us admire the faithful correspondence of St. Vincent Ferrer to all the graces which our Lord bestowed upon him. He preserved his baptismal innocence; he obeyed the voice that called him to a state of perfection; he scrupulously observed the rules of his Order, not only in the Convent, but outside, and that for more than fifty years, without ever failing; but, on the contrary, increasing daily in regularity, piety, detachment, prayer, charity, humility, progressing without ceasing in every virtue. In cities, among peoples, in his cell, on his journeys, in preaching, consoling the afflicted, devoting himself so lovingly to the good of souls, he was ever calm, peaceful, faithful to his duties, always holy. It was because he made an oratory of his heart, wherein he incessantly conversed with God, without experiencing the least interruption in his occupations. "He was on the one hand absorbed in God," observes Gomez, one of his biographers, "as though he were far removed from the conversation of men, and, on the other, he applied his mind so vigorously to his transactions with the world as if he had never had any intercourse with God."

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It was thus that the Saint accomplished the resolutions of his youth. One night while he prayed before the crucifix in the church of his Convent, the devil appeared to him in the shape of an Ethiopian, deformed and horrible to behold. "I will plot so much against thee, and draw thee into so many snares," said Satan, "that thou shalt be miserably enchained, and precipitated into evil." "And I," replied the Saint, "hope that Divine grace will assist me." "Not always," rejoined the tempter; "very few persevere in grace. When Christ shall abandon thee, thou wilt then know what my power of drawing thee into vice is." "But," answered Vincent once more, "God does not forsake those who put their trust in Him, and as He has given me grace to begin, I hope that He will still grant me that of perseverance in His service." With these words, followed by the sign of the Cross, the Saint put the lying spirit to flight.[1]

May God impart to you the generosity of this great model! May your resolutions be firm and efficacious to the end!

Litanies of the Saint.

[1] P. Antist. Nyder.

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NINTH DAY.

THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE.

"*Pœnitentiam agite: appropinquavit enim regnum cœlorum;*" "Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2).

MEDITATION.

I.—What we Lose by not Practising Penance.

WE lose immense benefits, treasures infinitely precious, namely: pardon, grace, merit.

We lose pardon. "A contrite and humble heart God will not despise" (Psalm l. 19). However great man's wickedness may be, however numerous his crimes, if he repents, if he does penance, God immediately pardons him; for He wills not the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and live. "Should a person," observes St. Vincent Ferrer, "have slain the twelve Apostles, should he have sinned with all sorts of people, and even crucified with his own hands the Lord Jesus, if he were sincerely repentant, and asked pardon of God, God would pardon him without delay, and restore him to His favour." But alas! if we have no regret for evils committed, if we do not humbly confess them, if we have no desire to correct them, if we do not purpose to avoid sin and to embrace the salutary exercises of penance, we can no longer count on God's pardon, His indulgence, and mercy. We close against ourselves the bowels of Divine goodness. See, my soul, the great danger thou incurrest, by refusing to do penance.

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We lose grace, grace which gives life, which purifies the soul, which renders it white as snow, fragrant as a garden filled with flowers, like to God, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, the august temple of the Trinity, the true kingdom of the Most High! And with grace we lose at the same time peace of heart, the consolation of a good conscience, the inebriating caresses of the King of Heaven, light and joy! In fine, we lose merit. When grace is received, it becomes in the soul a fountain of water, springing up to life eternal. It animates every action with its own spirit; even those which, by their nature, are indifferent, become meritorious of endless glory; and as grace is the seed of glory, in proportion as grace increases, so does merit also increase. "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). But if we are without grace, can we lay claim to the smallest merit? No. Whatever good we may do will be of no avail.

Si scires donum Dei! "O my soul, if thou didst know the gift of God" (John iv. 10). If thou didst know the value of penance, the supreme glory, the rich crown that is reserved for thee in heaven: ah! thou wouldst find no difficulty in embracing this virtue, in renouncing sin, in loving God, in observing His commandments, in living in the practice of good works; no, thou wouldst not experience any repugnance; on the contrary, penance would be thy delight.

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II.—What we Gain by not doing Penance.

We lay up for ourselves hateful, fatal treasures, a terrible gain! These are the treasures of sin. The just man, despite his prayers, his vigilance, and every other precaution that surrounds him, frequently falls; and he sighs over his weakness, his frailty, his inability to do good, his deplorable facility in doing evil. What, then, shall the impenitent sinner do, who delights in iniquity, who nurses his passions, who daily supplies them with fresh food, who roots himself in his criminal habits? He shall heap up abominations one upon another; his heart shall be a sink wherein the most odious crimes shall rot with age; perhaps adulteries, impurities without number, blasphemies, detractions, mortal hatreds, treacheries, vengeance, thefts, and countless injustices; profligacies, nameless debaucheries, frightful impieties. And these treasures of sin, alas! form, at the same time, an accumulation of wrath and vengeance. O, patience of my God, how formidable art Thou! When God supports with so much meekness, sweetness, and forbearance, the sinner who offends Him, His first purpose is to lead him to repentance. Thou heedest it not, O prevaricator of the Divine law, and thou multipliest daily thy sins, shamefully abusing the plan of grace; but art thou aware that God's second purpose, if thou refusest the first, is to allow thee to heap up wrath and punishment for the great day of His anger? The miser, who is continually adding to his treasure fresh pieces of gold and silver, without keep-

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IV. Have I never delayed to return to God under the pretence of His being good, patient, merciful, contrary to the advice of the Holy Ghost: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (Eccles. v. 8. 9).

V. Have I never deferred my repentance, by flattering myself that it would be more easy at another time, or that the difficulties would be less, and grace more abundant; a false notion, and a fatal delusion, since, on the contrary, the difficulties increase with the delay, while the latter weakens grace, hardens the heart, and draws down upon us the scourge of Divine justice?

VI. On determining to lead a new life, have I resolved to abandon my mind to troubles, my heart to sorrow and my body to suffering till the moment of death?

VII. Do I voluntarily submit myself to all the afflictions which our Lord sends me to enable me to expiate my offences,—such as interior trials, aridity, weariness, bodily infirmities, physical indisposition, inclemency of the seasons, the fatigues of my employments?

Conclusion.—Forget not that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and that the narrow gate of penance can alone afford us access to it.

Spiritual Instruction.—Carry yourselves back in spirit to the happy time when the earth was privileged to hear the preaching of St. Vincent Ferrer. Represent to your mind that procession of public penance, when the crowd of people, converted by that apostle of later times,

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scourged themselves with disciplines, and expressed by these signs their deep contrition and lively compassion for the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Picture to yourselves the tears of pity which flowed from the eyes of the beholders, and the salutary effects produced in their souls by this admirable display of penance. Were your hearts harder than stone, the sight of such a spectacle should soften them and dispose them to repentance; it might possibly be necessary even to modify the desire that would draw you to works of Christian mortification. The same thing might happen to you that took place in regard to a sinner whom St. Vincent converted at Lyons. This was a soldier whose conscience was burdened with many crimes. Having sincerely confessed to a priest of the Saint's company, the latter imposed on him, on account of the enormity of his offences, a penance to assist at the procession of *disciplinants* which took place every evening, and to scourge himself with his own hands. The soldier refused to accept this public and severe penance. Then, the priest, unable to overcome his reluctance, asked his permission to refer the matter to St. Vincent. This he granted. The Saint adopted a middle course, which showed his extreme kindness. "You will tell your penitent," he said to the confessor, "to go in the procession of *disciplinants*, but without obliging him to take the discipline."

The penance having been very much lessened, the soldier accepted it. He walked in the procession without any instrument of penance in his hand. But when he saw the generosity with which other sinners less

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guilty than himself scourged themselves, when he heard the groans of repentance which escaped from their breasts, his soul was keenly moved; he regretted not having provided himself with a discipline like the rest; he eagerly asked for one, he received it with joy, and commenced to flog himself with all his might, weeping and sighing. It became necessary to restrain his fervour, and to prevent him endangering his life.[1]

The Litanies of the Saint.

[1] Teoli, lib. ii. Tratt. ii. c. 5.

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SECTION THE THIRD.

Divers Prayers in honour of St. Vincent Ferrer.

I.—A Devout Prayer to obtain the protection of the glorious St. Vincent Ferrer, to be said on all the Fridays of his Devotion, during the Novena which precedes his Feast, and in all wants and necessities.

GLORIOUS Apostle of Spain, merciful St. Vincent, behold me at your feet, miserable as I am, supplicating you to take me under your powerful protection. This day and for ever, I choose you as my special advocate. Obtain for me of the Divine Clemency, the grace to enrich myself by the imitation of your virtues.

I desire to have in my heart a love which will consecrate me entirely to God and render me faithful in loving Him supremely, and serving Him with my whole heart. I desire that this love should lead me to devote myself to the service of my neighbour, to assist and solace him in all his necessities.

I desire to be endowed with humility which will enable me to submit myself to all, and while enlightening me in my misery, may dispose me to place myself beneath all. I desire to possess patience which will

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render me strong in adversity, humble amid offences, tranquil in calamities, patient in infirmities, and resigned in all things to the Divine Will.

I desire to have a true zeal by which, in working as I ought, for the salvation of my soul, I may guard against being an occasion of sin to others.

Obtain for me, dear St. Vincent, all these virtues and others which are necessary for the perfect fulfilment of the duties of my state, in order that, imitating in part your innumerable virtues, I may be enabled, through your intercession, to remain faithful to my God. I recommend to you, as my Protector, my entire being. I place under the eyes of your compassion, all my spiritual and temporal wants, and those of my relations, friends, and enemies, as well as of all those who confide in God and in you. Oh! most powerful Saint, obtain for us to-day and for ever, the grace which you know to be the most necessary for our spiritual advancement, and that which will best enable us to attain eternal beatitude. Strengthen us against the snares of the devil, defend us against the enemies of our salvation, deliver us from the dangers of soul and body, and obtain for us grace to live with God on earth, that we may arrive at the enjoyment of Him with you in heaven. Amen.

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II.—A Prayer which may be said on each of the Seven Fridays before and after the Feast of St. Vincent Ferrer, to obtain some particular grace.

SINCE God the Eternal, to manifest His power and grant mercy to them who ask it of Him with faith, has deposited in you, O my Protector, an inexhaustible treasure of grace, your intercession is even more powerful than when on earth, now that you are in heaven. Full of confidence, I therefore cast myself at your feet, and recommend to you all my necessities and those of my family, relations, friends, and benefactors. But I beseech you in particular (*Express here the grace which you desire to obtain*). Gracious Saint! vouchsafe that my confidence in you may not be disappointed. Offer to the Divine Majesty your supplications and prayers in my behalf, and obtain the salvation of my soul. Let tribulations and sorrows increase, I will rejoice in them, provided my patience increases more and more in proportion, and that I save my soul. Amen.

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III.—The following Prayers may be said every Friday.

First Prayer.

MOST faithful St. Vincent, you who with so much zeal extended the faith of Jesus Christ, grant, I pray you, that uniting my works to my faith, I may have, like you, a living faith; that till the last moment of my life, I may desire to live and die in the faith which you had, and that, like you, I may be able to say to my Lord: "I believe, O Lord, I believe."

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Second Prayer.

O most amiable St. Vincent, grant that after your example I may unite my hope to my faith, resting solely on the bounty of the Lord. And though I own myself unworthy, on account of the numberless sins which I have committed, yet I nourish in the depth of my heart a firm hope of being able to bless and extol throughout eternity, the mercies of my God.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Third Prayer.

O most good and kind St. Vincent, you who are all inflamed with charity, obtain for me the grace to love God above all things, that burning with a holy love, I may never offend my God through interest, or for the sake

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of any worldly pleasure; but that I may for ever love Him, and implore His Divine Love.

"*Diligam te, Domine: diligam te, virtus mea*" (Psalm xvii. 2).

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Fourth Prayer.

O most humble St. Vincent, you who have the most profound sentiments of humility, obtain for me from our Lord, I beseech you, this virtue, that I may for ever fix my thoughts on my misery, my imperfections, and my nothingness. Grant that I may never be assailed by pride, and that, in order to keep myself humble and little in my own estimation, I may have always present to my mind, this great truth, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble;" "*Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam*" (James iv. 6).

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Fifth Prayer.

O most pure St. Vincent, who until death preserved unstained the beautiful lily of your virginity, vouchsafe that I may keep my mind pure in the sight of God, that I may have a horror of every impure thought, and that, through your intercession, God may grant my prayer. "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels;" "*Cor mundum*

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crea in me, Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis" (Psalm l. 12).

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Sixth Prayer.

O great St. Vincent, you who were a martyr of penitence, obtain for me from God the spirit of compunction and a true sorrow for my sins, that I may weep over them, and detest them with a truly contrite heart, and that I may thus receive God's pardon of them, which I humbly implore. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise;" "*Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies*" (Psalm l. 19).

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Seventh Prayer.

O St. Vincent, you who wrought such wondrous miracles, you will never reject the humble supplications of those who consecrate themselves to your worship. I beseech you to be my Protector in life and in death. In life to help me in my necessities; in death to assist my soul, that it may attain eternal salvation, and that thus, having glorified God through you on earth, I may glorify Him with you in heaven, for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

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IV.—Litany of St. Vincent Ferrer.

ORD, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of heaven, *Have mercy on us.*
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *Have mercy on us.*
God the Holy Ghost, *Have mercy on us.*
Holy Trinity, one God, *Have mercy on us.*
Holy Mary, *Pray for us.*
Holy Mother of God, *Pray for us.*
Holy Virgin of virgins, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, glory of Valencia, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, lily of purity, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, miracle of piety from childhood, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, interpreter of the Holy Trinity, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, pearl of virginity, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, burning light of charity, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, mirror of penance, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, trumpet of eternal salvation, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, flower of heavenly wisdom, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, preacher of the holy Gospel, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, powerful in work and word, *Pray for us.*
St. Vincent, apostle of the universe, *Pray for us.*

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St. Vincent, prophet of Christ Who is to come, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most devout to the Mother of God, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, ever most pious, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most fervent reconciler of souls, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most bountiful to the poor, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most learned teacher, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most holy preacher, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most firm under every temptation, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most illustrious by miracles, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, cherished by Jesus Christ, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most addicted to prayer, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, burning for the salvation of souls, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, true model of humility, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, confessor filled with knowledge, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, most powerful resuscitator of the dead. *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, love of the faithful of God, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, support of the holy faith, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, health of the sick, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, master of penitents, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, refuge of the afflicted, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, star of those who hope in God, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, brightness of the elect, *Pray for us.*

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St. Vincent, conqueror of devils, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, companion of angels, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, treasure of virtue, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, sight of the blind, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, hearing of the deaf, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, speech of the dumb, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent, consolation of the desolate, *Pray for us.*

We sinners beseech thee hear us.

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to obtain for us an increase of faith and devotion. *We beseech thee hear us.*

That through thy merits, we may be made participators of eternal beatitude. *We beseech thee hear us.*

That through thy holy prayers, we may obtain the pardon of our sins. *We beseech thee hear us.*

That through thy holy intercession, we may merit to become true children of Mary. *We beseech thee hear us.*

That through thee, we may be delivered from all evils of soul and body. *We beseech thee hear us.*

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to obtain for us before death a true repentance and contrition. *We beseech thee hear us.*

That thou wouldst vouchsafe to intercede for us. *We beseech thee hear us.*

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world: *Spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world: *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*

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Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world: *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

V. Pray for us, Blessed Vincent.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray.

O God, Who by the salutary preaching of Blessed Vincent, Thy confessor, didst mercifully call the multitude of the people to the ardour of Thy love and to the fear of the terrible judgment, grant, we beseech Thee, that through his merits and intercession, we may stand secure at that awful judgment, and enjoy Thy promises in eternal beatitude. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us Pray.

O God, Who hast adorned the Blessed Vincent, Thy confessor, with innumerable virtues and merits, and hast accorded to his prayers the health of the sick and infirm, grant, we beseech Thee, that after his example, despising the earth and sighing after heaven, we may rise from our iniquities, and by his holy intercession may merit to be cured of the evils of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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V.—Another Litany of St. Vincent Ferrer.

ORD, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven, *Have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *Have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Ghost, *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, Mother of God, *Pray for us.*

Holy Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, *Pray for us.*

St. Dominic, our august Father, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, called from the maternal breast to the work of preaching, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, eloquent preacher among the youthful companions of thy own age, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, most worthy son of St. Dominic, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, model of profound humility. *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, lover of evangelical poverty, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, imitator of the purity of angels, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, accomplished in obedience, *Pray for us.*

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St. Vincent Ferrer, who didst lead to a high degree of sanctity a great number of disciples, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, prudent director of souls, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, enlightened master of the spiritual life, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, whose face during your discourse was transfigured, whose countenance shone with dazzling splendour, and who no longer appeared a man, but an angel descended from heaven, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who received, like the Apostles, the gift of tongues, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who confirmed your preaching by continual prodigies, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who, by the ministry of the heavenly spirits, fed the people in a desert with a miraculous bread, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who cured a multitude of sick, blind, deaf, dumb, lame, and paralysed, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who raised the dead to life, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who exercised an irresistible power over hell and its agents, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who were followed in your apostolic journeys by a numerous band of penitent souls, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who associated in your work an edifying company of Priests and Religious, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who, despite your labours and

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fatigue, scrupulously kept all the observances, and practised all the austerities of the cloister, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who were faithful to your vocation till the end, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who merited to be visited by the heavenly choirs in the hour of your agony, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, who wear in heaven the double crown of virginity and the doctorate, *Pray for us.*

St. Vincent Ferrer, immortal glory of the Order of Friar Preachers, *Pray for us.*

That we may be converted, St. Vincent Ferrer, *Pray for us.*

That the thought of our last end may be ever present to our minds, St. Vincent Ferrer, *Pray for us.*

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That we may be faithful to all the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, St. Vincent Ferrer, *Pray for us.*

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